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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 13 MARCH 2025 | THURSDAY | BENGALURU | 12 RAMADAN, 1446 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 70 | Pages: 8

City parents hire detectives to spy on teens

SARAH FAZAL
BENGALURU, 12 MARCH

In a surprising trend, Bengaluru parents are turning to private detectives to monitor their children, suspecting them of drug use, alcohol consumption, smoking, and other risky behaviours.

Naman Jain, Managing Director of Sleuths Detective Agency, Bengaluru, clarifies that not all cases stem from suspicion. "While 80 per cent of parents come to us when they fear their child is going astray, 20 per cent seek reassurance." *—Salar News*

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US VP Vance, wife Usha likely to visit India this month

WASHINGTON, 12 MARCH

US Vice President JD Vance is likely to travel to India later this month, according to a media report. "Vance will travel to India later this month alongside Second Lady Usha Vance," a report in Politico said, citing three sources familiar with the plans. "It marks Vance's second foreign trip as vice president after making his world stage debut in France and Germany last month". Usha Vance's parents Krish Chilukuri and Lakshmi Chilukuri emigrated from India to the US in the late 1970s. This will be Usha Vance's "first time visiting her ancestral country as second lady." Usha is a litigator and has also clerked for Chief Justice John G Roberts of the US Supreme Court *—PTI*

Autorickshaw fare likely to rise after Metro & bus hike

BENGALURU, 12 MARCH

After a steep hike in Metro Rail and government bus ticket prices, the autorickshaw fares in Bengaluru are also likely to rise. In response to demands from autorickshaw drivers' associations in the city, the Bengaluru City District Regional Transport Authority has convened a meeting on Wednesday to discuss a possible fare revision. According to sources in the transport department, presently the minimum fare stands at Rs 30 and an additional charge of Rs 15 per kilometre beyond two kilometres. The autorickshaw drivers have proposed raising the minimum fare to Rs 50 and charge Rs 25 per kilometre for distances exceeding two kilometres. However, the transport department is pushing to cap the minimum fare at Rs 40, with a per km rate of Rs 20. *—PTI*

Kyiv open to US' 30-day ceasefire deal

US lifted suspension of military aid & intelligence

JEDDAH, 12 MARCH

The Trump administration lifted its suspension of military aid and intelligence sharing for Ukraine, and Kyiv signaled that it was open to a 30-day ceasefire in the war with Russia, pending Moscow's agreement, American and Ukrainian officials said following talks in Saudi Arabia.

The administration imposed the measures a week ago to push Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to enter talks to end the war with invading Russian forces.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the US would present the ceasefire offer to the Kremlin.

"We're going to tell them this is what's on the table. Ukraine is ready to stop shooting and start talking. And now it'll be up to them to say yes or no," Rubio said. "If they say no, then we'll unfortunately know what impediment is to peace here."

Russia on Wednesday said a phone call between President Vladimir Putin and his US counterpart Donald Trump could be arranged "very quickly" if necessary, according to state-run TASS news agency.

Reacting to the development, the Kremlin said it does not rule out the possibility that the issue of a telephone conversation between Putin and Trump may arise following the US-Ukrainian negotiations and be organised swiftly.

President Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, is expected to travel later this week to Moscow, where he could meet with President Vladimir Putin, according to a person familiar with the matter but not authorised to comment publicly. *—PTI*

Talks were held between Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio **PHOTO: AP**

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WH: Look at India, 150% tariff on American alcohol

New York, 12 MARCH

The US again raised the issue of tariffs that India imposes on its goods, citing high tariffs on American alcohol and agricultural products. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt made references to high tariffs by India during a press briefing on Tuesday when she was responding to a question on Canada.

"You look at India, 150% tariff on American alcohol. You think that's helping Kentucky bourbon be exported into India? I don't think so. 100% tariff on agricultural products from India. Leavitt held up a chart that showed tariffs charged by India, Canada and Japan. On the chart, two circles with the colors of the tri-colour highlighted the tariffs that India imposes. *—PTI*

PM Narendra Modi after being conferred Mauritius' highest civilian award by President of Mauritius Dharam Gokhool **PHOTO: PTI**

India, Mauritius ink 8 pacts; PM unveils 'MAHASAGAR vision'

PORT LOUIS, 12 MARCH

India and Mauritius on Wednesday elevated their ties to an 'enhanced strategic partnership' and inked eight pacts to boost cooperation in several sectors including trade and maritime security even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled an ambitious vision for the development of the Global South.

The agreements inked will provide for promoting the use of national currencies for cross-border transactions, sharing of maritime data, joint work in combating money laundering and enhancing cooperation in the MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) sector.

On the second and final day of his two-day trip to Port Louis, Modi attended the national day celebrations of Mauritius as the chief guest.

Following talks with his Mauritian counterpart Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Modi announced India's new vision for Global South and named it "MAHASAGAR" or "Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions", a policy approach that came against the backdrop of China's relentless attempts to expand its influence in the Indian Ocean.

Modi said free, open, secure, and safe Indian Ocean is the common priority of India and Mauritius and that he and Ramgoolam agreed that defence cooperation and maritime security are important part of strategic partnership between two countries. *—PTI*

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Gujarat student raped by 7 for 16 months

PALANPUR, 12 MARCH

- One of the six accused befriended the 20-year-old woman over Instagram, months after she started attending a college in Palanpur

A college student from Gujarat's Banaskantha district was allegedly repeatedly raped by seven people for nearly 16 months after being blackmailed with her nude video, police said Wednesday.

One of the six accused befriended the 20-year-old woman over Instagram months after she started attending a college in Palanpur in 2023.

In November 2023, he persuaded her to join him for breakfast at a hotel. He deliberately spilled food on her dress and took her to a room on the pretext of cleaning it.

Police said when the student removed her clothes in the bathroom, the accused, identified as Vishal Chaudhary, barged inside and filmed her.

When she protested, he threatened to make the video public and post it on Instagram, said the first information report (FIR), which was registered.

Using the same clip, he forced the student to have physical relations with him and his friends at different places on different occasions between 2023 and 2025.

After the woman approached Palanpur police, a case was registered against six identified and an unknown person under sections concerning repeated rape and criminal intimidation of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. *—PTI*

GREATER BENGALURU BILL PASSED IN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

BENGALURU, 12 MARCH

Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill 2024, which proposes decentralisation of governance in Bengaluru City through multiple corporations, was passed in the Legislative Council on Wednesday.

Replying to the Council members who raised some concerns on the Bill, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who also holds Bengaluru Development portfolio, said, "Opposition members have given good suggestions. We are trying to lay a foundation for the future Bengaluru City like Kempe Gowda laid the foundation for the old City."

"Leaser of the Opposition Narayana Swamy raised the issue of planning. We have introduced self-declaration scheme for building plan approvals. We have also not made any changes to Article 74. As it is not possible to transfer revenues from local body to another, it has been decided to provide government support for economically weaker local bodies," he said.

"CT Ravi raised the issue of BDA and BMRDA. The planning authorities will have jurisdiction of the Greater Bengaluru region. The CM will also have to preside over the meetings at regular intervals as many projects need financial clearance," he said. *—Salar News*

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MUMBAI SHOCK

Rs 1,200 cr scam, black magic claims shake Lilavati Hospital

MUMBAI, 12 MARCH

Mumbai's prestigious Lilavati Hospital has been rocked by allegations of large-scale financial fraud and an unexpected twist involving black magic. The current trustees of Lilavati Kirtilal Mehta Medical Trust have accused former trustees of misappropriating Rs 1,200 crore and engaging in occult practices on the hospital premises.

The trustees claimed they discovered eight urns containing human bones, hair, rice, and other ritualistic items buried beneath the office floor.

According to Parambir Singh, the hospital's executive director and former Mumbai Police Commissioner, the discovery was made in the presence of witnesses and recorded on video.

Following this, the trust sought police intervention to file a case under Maharashtra's anti-black magic law. The financial scandal was uncovered following a forensic audit by Chetan Dalal Investigation and Management Services and ADB and Associates.

The audit revealed widespread irregularities, fund siphoning, and manipulation of financial records by the former trustees, who are allegedly non-resident Indians based in Dubai and Belgium.

Trustee Prashant Mehta stated that the findings indicated over Rs 1,500 crore had been misused, including funds being funneled to third-party distributors and used for personal expenses.

More than three FIRs have been registered against the former trustees, and a fourth case, specifically related to the black magic allegations, is pending in court. Complaints have also been lodged with the Enforcement Directorate to probe potential money laundering. *—Agencies*

Parents protest against child labour in Yadgir school

YADGIR, 12 MARCH

Even five days after an incident where a private school in Kembhavi town used students to lift a bore well pipe, no action has been taken against the school, leading to public outrage.

This incident took place at Jnanadeepa School, located near the Surapura-Hunagunda state highway in Kembhavi. A video of the event went viral, showing school authorities and staff using children to lift a borewell pipe, which was over 300 feet deep, near the school compound. Following this, the Child Protection Committee and education department officials visited school for inspection.

Despite witnessing several alarming scenes during their visit, officials have yet to take action against the school, leaving the public frustrated.

The Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights took the issue seriously and issued strict orders to the Deputy Director of Public Instruction to immediately file a case.

PHOTO: SALAR

Channabasappa Mudhol, DDPI of Yadgir, said, "I had already instructed the Block Education Officer (BEO) to register a case through a mobile message on the day of the incident. Now, the Child Rights Commission has also given instructions," said.

Karave leader Sreeshail Kachapur criticised the education department's inaction, stating, "The failure to take action against the school, which put children's lives at risk, raises serious doubts about the officials' intentions." *—Salar News*

Retail inflation hits 7-month low of 3.61%

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

Subdued food prices in February pulled down retail inflation below the Reserve Bank's median target of 4 per cent while the country's manufacturing sector pushed the key factory output index to 5 per cent in January, showed data by government.

The sharp decline in inflation has raised the prospects for another rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on 9 April. If RBI reduces rate next month, it will be the second rate cut within two months.

Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based retail inflation slipped to seven-month low of 3.61 per cent in February mainly due to easing prices of vegetables, eggs, and other protein-rich items, creating space for the RBI to go for cut in interest rate next month.

The headline inflation was at 4.26 per cent in January and 5.09 per cent in February 2024. The previous low was witnessed in July.

Key items having lowest inflation in February were ginger (-35.81 per cent), jeera (-28.77 per cent), tomato (-28.51 per cent), cauliflower (-21.19 per cent), garlic (-20.32 per cent).

On the other hand, top items with highest inflation were coconut oil (54.48 per cent), coconut (41.61 per cent), gold (35.56 per cent), silver (30.89 per cent), and onion (30.42 per cent). *—PTI*

'SCRIPTURES OLDER THAN ISLAM'

Sambhal mosque built over Vishnu Temple: Yogi

LUCKNOW, 12 MARCH

Sambhal has been mentioned in scriptures 5,000 years ago and predates Islam, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Wednesday amid a controversy over the origins of a mosque believed by some to be built on the site of a demolished temple.

The Vishnu temple in the town was destroyed in 1526 and two years later so was the Ram temple in Ayodhya, he said while asserting that 'bhagwa' (saffron) is his identity and the "entire world will wear it one day".

"Sambhal has been mentioned in scriptures that are 5,000 years old. They contain references to Lord Vishnu's future incarnation. Islam, on the other hand, emerged only 1,400 years ago. I am talking about something that predates Islam by at least 2,000 years," Adityanath said.

Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath (inset) said, Vishnu temple was destroyed in 1526 & 2 years later Ram temple in Ayodhya **PHOTO: PTI**

"The evidence for these things has existed for centuries. Remember, in 1526, a temple of Lord Vishnu in Sambhal was demolished. Two years later, in 1528, the Ram temple in Ayodhya was destroyed," Adityanath said.

He claimed that both acts were done by Mir Baqi, commander of Mughal emperor Babur, but excavation efforts in Sambhal have uncovered 18 ancient pilgrimage sites.

Tension has been simmering in Sambhal since last November after riots erupted during a court-ordered survey of Shahi Jama Masjid. *—PTI*

CII Karnataka elects Rabindra Srikantan as Head

BENGALURU, 12 MARCH

CII Karnataka announced its new office bearers on Wednesday, appointing Rabindra Srikantan as chairman and Guruprasad Mudlapur as vice chairman. The announcement was made at its State Annual Meeting for 2024-25, followed by a conference titled "Karnataka: Leading Technology & Knowledge Growth." According to the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Srikantan, the newly appointed chairman of its Karnataka Chapter, is the founder and managing director of ASM Technologies Limited, a publicly listed company in India. "With over 35 years of experience, Srikantan brings a global perspective to engineering, design, and manufacturing leadership. *—PTI*

PHOTO: INSTA

Plaint against CNC Chief over security for Rashmika

MADIKERI, 12 MARCH

A complaint has been filed against Codava National Council (CNC) president Nandineda Nachappa, who sought security for actress Rashmika Mandanna following a controversial remark made by Congress MLA Ravi Kumar Gowda. The complaint, filed by another organisation, alleges that Nachappa is trying to create divisions in society and disturb law and order. The complaint has been submitted to the Mandya Superintendent of Police. Earlier this month, the Kodava rights' protection organization, Codava National Council (CNC), expressed serious concerns over Mandanna's safety, urging the Union and Karnataka Home Ministers to provide her with security amid the ongoing political controversy. *—PTI*

UP grants ₹25L to Maha Kumbh Belagavi victims

BELAGAVI, 12 MARCH

The Uttar Pradesh government has released a compensation of Rs 25 lakh each to the families of four individuals from Belagavi who lost their lives in the stampede at the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj on 29 January, an official said on Wednesday. Speaking to reporters, Belagavi Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Roshan stated that after discussions with Prayagraj District Commissioner Ravi Manjar, the compensation amount was directly credited to the accounts of the families of the deceased. He added that the verification process was conducted through the village accountant. According to him, the families of the deceased had pointed out spelling errors in the names on the death. *—PTI*

Six people in Bidar to donate their bodies to science

BIDAR, 12 MARCH

Six individuals from the district have voluntarily pledged to donate their bodies for medical education after their demise, according to Dr Sandeep Deshmukh, Professor and Head of the Department of Anatomy at Bidar Institute of Medical Sciences (BRIMS). The donors include Shivaraj S Nilage, Bandeppa M Bachchan, Lakshmi Ghalappa, Lata Chandrakant, and the couple Basavaraj K Patil and Gauramma Patil. Deshmukh said that body donation is a noble act, allowing medical students, including MBBS and postgraduate students, to study human anatomy in-depth. Instead of the body being buried or cremated, donating it for scientific research and education is a meaningful decision. Any individual can voluntarily donate their body to a medical college, he said. *— Salar News*

BJP-JD(S) urge Guv to scrap guarantees panel

Meanwhile, Oppn MLAs protest over misuse of tax revenue

BENGALURU, 12 MARCH

Opposition BJP and JD(S) on Wednesday petitioned Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot requesting for annualing of State, district, and taluk-level committees -- headed by Congress workers and leaders -- set up to oversee the implementation of the government's five guarantee schemes, calling them "unconstitutional".

Stating that these committees are exclusively composed of Congress party workers, they said that the formation of these panels purely on political lines is not just "unconstitutional", but also an undue burden on the state exchequer.

They later, led by the Leader of Opposition in Legislative Assembly R Ashoka, State BJP President BY Vijayendra, JD(S) floor leader CB Suresh Babu and others, marched to Raj Bhavan to hand over the memorandum to the Governor.

In the petition, they requested the Governor to immediately dissolve the guarantee implementation committees, and said, "annul these politically motivated committees to prevent further misuse of public funds."

LoP in legislative Assembly R Ashoka, BJP State President BY Vijayendra and others protest on Wednesday *PHOTO: SALAR*

The government extending the facilities of the Cabinet Minister and the Minister of State to the president and five vice presidents of the state-level committee to oversee the implementation of guarantee schemes; also paying a monthly honorarium of Rs 40,000 and Rs 25,000 to the presidents of district and taluk-level committees respectively, have come under intense criticism from opposition.

While the vice president of the district committee is paid Rs 10,000 monthly honorarium, a pay of Rs 1,100 and Rs 1,000 is paid as a sitting fee for the members of district and taluk level committees respectively.

Meanwhile, BJP and JD(S) MLAs staged a protest at the Vidhana Soudha, accusing the Congress government of misusing State's tax revenue.

The protest focused on allegations that the state government was mishandling public funds meant for the welfare of the people. *—PTI*

Tamil Nadu Forest Minister K Ponmudy with CM Siddaramaiah at CM's residence Kaveri in Bengaluru on Wednesday *PHOTO: SALAR*

CM backs DMK's LS delimitation campaign

BENGALURU, 12 MARCH

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday extended support to the DMK-led Opposition against the proposed delimitation of Parliamentary constituencies.

During a meeting with a delegation of DMK leaders here, he condemned the Centre's alleged attempt to "weaken" democracy and federalism.

Tamil Nadu Forest Minister K Ponnumudi and Rajya Sabha MP Mohammed Abdullah Ismail called on Siddaramaiah at his residence Cauvery to discuss the ongoing protests against the "anti-democratic and anti-southern stance of the central government", a statement issued by the CM Office said.

Earlier, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin also discussed the matter with the Chief Minister over the phone, the CMO said.

"During the discussion with the Tamil Nadu government delegation and Stalin, Siddaramaiah also expressed his support for the resistance of the southern states," it said.

DMK has been reaching out to leaders of different parties, including those also within the NDA like Chandrababu Naidu, to discuss the delimitation issue. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said that he would discuss with the High Command Tamil Nadu's invitation to participate in the anti-delimitation meeting in Chennai. "The ruling party of Tamil Nadu is our alliance partner and we are in agreement with their stance on the delimitation As we are a national party, we need to discuss this with our party high command. We will decide on the next steps after seeking their advice. We have informed Tamil Nadu the same. The delegation from Tamil Nadu discussed various aspects with us including language. It is time we work together to uphold our self-respect," he said. *—PTI*

'Can't hold KPSC re-exam unless court directs us'

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the re-examination for Karnataka Civil Services-2023-24 cannot be conducted unless the court gives any such instruction. The Karnataka Public Service Commission had conducted the exam in May 2024. Due to wrong translations of questions in Kannada, the re-exam was held where again the mistakes were found in the translations. Based on an expert committee report, the Karnataka government decided to give grace marks to the candidates and hold the mains examination. However, a few candidates approached the Karnataka Administrative Tribunal (KAT), which had stayed the mains examination.

Gold smuggling case: DyCM alleges 'BJP links', 'game plan'

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

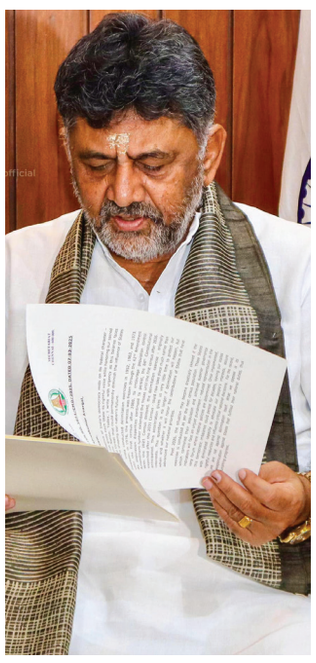
Dismissing reports linking two state ministers to the gold smuggling case involving Kannada actress Ranya Rao as mere "speculations," Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday demanded evidence and alleged a BJP "game plan" behind it.

Asserting that there are no Congress links to the gold smuggling case and that none of its ministers are involved, he stated that there may be a BJP connection.

"It's just unnecessary speculation. Which minister's name has come up? Has anyone seen or heard of it? When we politicians attend weddings or functions, hundreds of people take pictures with us. Just because someone takes a picture with me, does that mean they are related to me?" Shivakumar asked in response to a question.

Speaking to reporters, he said, "If someone who took a photo with me or the Chief Minister at a wedding or function is later involved in a crime, does that mean we are supporting them?" If there are facts about which minister is involved or who has supported them, please provide them, he added. Citing media reports, the opposition BJP has been urging the Congress government and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to disclose the names of ministers allegedly involved in the gold smuggling case.

"Will you reveal which ministers are connected to gold smuggler Ranya?" the saffron party asked in a post on 'X,' tagging Karnataka Congress. The post included a picture of Siddaramaiah and Home Minister G Parameshwara with Ranya Rao and her family, likely taken at her wedding. Meanwhile, the Economic Offences Court in Bengaluru adjourned the bail hearing of Rao till 14 March. *—PTI*



DK Shivakumar *PHOTO: FB*

Haveri DC's car seized over unpaid compensation

HAVERI, 12 MARCH

The failure of the district administration to provide land acquisition compensation has led the court to order the seizure of Haveri Deputy Commissioner (DC) Vijay Mahantesh Danammanavar's official car. Acting on the court's directive, lawyers confiscated the vehicle used by the DC.

The case pertains to Rudrappa Basappa Guttal, a resident of Keravadi village in Haveri district. The administration had taken possession of 2 acres and 29 guntas of land and later transferred it to the Minor Irrigation Department. However, despite several years passing, the compensation remained unpaid.

The affected party, Shivakka Guttal, subsequently filed a case in the Senior Civil Court. The court had directed to pay Rs 45.80 lakh in compensation, including interest. *—Salar News*

3-language policy row: Sudha says I know 8

NEW DELHI/BENGALURU, 12 MARCH

Rajya Sabha MP Sudha Murty voiced her support for the three-language policy in the National Education Policy (NEP), which encourages students to learn multiple languages.

Reflecting on her own experience with languages, she stated, "I have always believed that one can learn multiple languages and I myself know 7-8 languages. So I enjoy learning and children can earn a lot."

Earlier, Congress MP Karti Chidambaram slammed the Union Government on the issue of the three-language policy. He stated that Tamil Nadu is well served on two language formula, that is , English and Tamil and that making the "third language" compulsory is "completely unacceptable."

"To thrust a third language on us would be completely unacceptable, and the Union government must be flexible in implementing its policies," he said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also lashed out at Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) over its opposition to the three-language policy, accusing the Stalin government of creating a "political mess" in Tamil Nadu and denying children their "right to learn." *—ANI*

Sudha Murty *PHOTO: X*

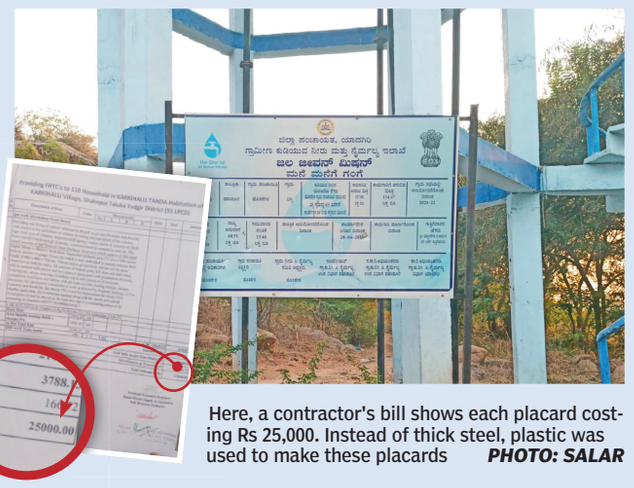
₹36L embezzled in Jal Jeevan placard deal

YOHAN P HONNADDI
YADGIR, 12 MARCH

A major financial scam has surfaced in Shahapur, in Yadgir district where officials and contractors allegedly siphoned off Rs 3[illegible] lakh under the pretext of installing placards for Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) project.

Between 2021 and 2025, 14[illegible] projects were undertaken with an allocated budget of Rs 25,000 per placard. However, instead of using the prescribed 3mm thick mild steel sheets with durable paint and steel poles, contractors substituted them with low-quality, plastic-coated thin sheets and flex banners.

All 144 placards were awarded to a single contractor, who also charged an inflated Rs 1,000 per board for transportation. Speaking to **Salar News,** activist Bhimaraya Barigida accused multiple officials — including executive engineers, assistant executive engineers, and junior engineers — of colluding with contractors to misappropriate funds, allegedly installing low-quality placards for as little as Rs 4,000 each.



Here, a contractor's bill shows each placard costing Rs 25,000. Instead of thick steel, plastic was used to make these placards *PHOTO: SALAR*

Activists have urged the District Panchayat Chief Executive Officer to take action by forming an inquiry panel, suspending corrupt officials, recovering the misused funds, and blacklisting fraudulent contractors.

Barigida told **Salar News:** "Officials had falsified records to loot public funds while failing to provide proper drinking water to rural communities." With pressure from activists and the public, authorities will hopefully take swift action to ensure accountability and justice. *—Salar News*

'VIOLATES FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS'

City parents hire private detectives to spy on their teens

SARAH FAZAL
BENGALURU, 12 MARCH

Growing up in India, most children have experienced strict parenting — curfews, limited access to mobile phones, strict rules against dating, and a firm stance against smoking or drinking.

However, for Gen Z (those born between 1997-2012) and Gen Alpha parents (born between 2010-2014), the challenges have evolved. The rise of social media, unrestricted access to online content, and increasing influence of technology have made parenting teenagers more complex than ever.

While some parents justify tracking their kids out of concern, mental health experts warn of its negative impact.

Priyanka MB, Founder & Senior Psychologist at Inspiron Psychological Wellbeing Center, calls this helicopter parenting — an excessive control approach that can erode trust and autonomy. "Constant surveillance damages the parent-child relationship," she says.

So why are parents seeking external help instead of communicating with their children?

Deepak MD, founder of Aim Detective Agency, Bengaluru, shares a case with **Salar News** where a teenage boy's behaviour — returning home late, avoiding conversations, and becoming physically lean—led his parents to hire detectives. The investigation revealed he was involved in substance abuse. "Parents had tried speaking to him but failed, leaving them with no other option," he explains.

Legal Concerns over Snooping

Naman Jain reveals that some investigations involve installing software bugs on phones or placing hidden devices in rooms and vehicles to monitor conversations. Reacting to this, Advocate Vinay says, "For children under 18, surveillance remains a grey area, but bugging is not legal. While reasonable monitoring is acceptable, invasive spying violates fundamental rights."

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Most detective stories involve teens aged 13–19. Advocate Vinay warns that spying on children over 18 violates their right to privacy. "There is no specific law on parental surveillance, but the right to privacy judgment protects autonomy, informational privacy, and the right to make choices." Many parents strongly criticise the practice of hiring detectives, calling it highly inappropriate.

Rekha Mallan, a Bengaluru-based mother of two teen daughters, acknowledges that child safety is a major concern for any parent but believes surveillance is not the solution. She says, "Trust, open conversations, and guidance go a long way in helping children navigate challenges. Instead of spying, we should focus on building a relationship where they feel safe to share, seek help, and make the right choices."

Dominique Das, another Bengaluru-based parent with a pre-teen daughter says, "Hiring detectives is too much. I'd rather put an AirTag in my daughter's bag to ensure her safety. We should focus on teaching our kids the right values and helping them differentiate between right and wrong."

Teenagers call it an invasion of privacy

Kumkum, a 12th-grade student, expresses frustration. "Imagine hanging out with friends, unaware that someone is secretly tracking your every move. Instead of spying, why can't parents just talk to us and build trust? Treating us like suspects only pushes us away."

Medha, a media studies student, believes parental anxiety is driving this behaviour. "I understand why parents worry. But hiring detectives to snoop on children can lead to trust issues in the long run."

The cost of snooping

The cost of hiring a private investigator varies depending on the case. Deepak MD, founder of Aim Detective Agency in Bengaluru, explains, "Daily charges range from Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000, while weekly packages start at Rs 35,000 depending on the complexity of the case. However, we do offer concessions to clients from humble financial backgrounds." He added that his agency handles an average of 5–10 such cases daily. *— Salar News*

PHOTO: ANI

VP Dhankhar discharged from AIIMS after 3 days

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankar was discharged from AIIMS-Delhi on Wednesday after making a satisfactory recovery, the premier hospital said. He was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on 9 March following cardiac-related ailments. "After receiving necessary care from the medical team at AIIMS, he made a satisfactory recovery and was discharged on March 12," AIIMS-Delhi said. Dhankhar on X, thanked the medical team of the AIIMS. "Deeply appreciate the exemplary care and professionalism of the medical team at AIIMS. Their dedication and meticulous attention ensured a smooth recovery," he said, thanking others for their well-wishes. "Grateful for the concern and good wishes from well-wishers." —*PTI*

CPI(M) calls Manipur budget 'inadequate'

IMPHAL, 12 MARCH

The CPI(M) termed the Manipur budget "inadequate" in addressing issues such as people's suffering due to ethnic violence, rising inflation and unemployment. "How will this budget cover the requirements of more than 60,000 people who have been rendered homeless? How will the budget compensate them to rebuild houses that have been razed to the ground in," CPI(M) state unit secretary Kshetrimayum Shanta told PTI. "There has been an increase in allocations as compared to the last fiscal. However, the budget is inadequate to address issues that people are grappling," he said. The state witnessed one of the most devastating floods in decades but there has been no mention of the deluge, Shanta claimed. "A major increase in allocations is required. This budget has been hurriedly drafted without any discussion," he added. —*PTI*

M'rashtra BJP worker held for attempted murders

MUMBAI, 12 MARCH

Satish Bhosale, a BJP worker and close aide of Beed MLA Suresh Dhas, has been arrested in an attempt to murder case from Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra police said on Wednesday. Bhosale also faces charges in several other cases. Bhosale has two attempts to murder cases and a case under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act registered against him in Beed district, an official said. He also has case under the Forest Act registered against him. Recently, a video where he and his gang members were purportedly seen assaulting a man with a cricket bat had gone viral. A local farmer had also lodged a complaint against Bhosale for allegedly hitting him on the face with an axe when the farmer's son objected to Bhosale's gang laying a trap to hunt deer. —*PTI*

No intel shared by ban on party: J&K CM Omar

GULMARG, 12 MARCH

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said the Centre has not shared any intelligence with his government that could have warranted the ban on Mirwaiz Umar Farooq's Awami Action Committee. "I do not know the basis of the ban. This is not under the purview of the elected government (in J&K) and the intelligence on the basis of which it has taken place has not been shared with us," Abdullah said. The Centre had on Tuesday banned the AAC, headed by influential cleric Farooq, and Shia leader Masroor Abbas Ansari-led IM for five years for their alleged anti-national activities. —*PTI*

Parliament passes Oilfield Amendment Bill 2024

Govt says India is only country where petrol, diesel prices fell

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

Parliament passed a bill that seeks to amend the existing law governing exploration and production of oil and gas as well as delink petroleum operations from mining operations to boost investment. The Lok Sabha cleared the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024, on Wednesday. The bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha on 3 December, 2024.

Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said India is the only country in the world where the prices of petrol and diesel have actually come down in the last three years.

"We have brought down the prices of petrol and diesel because the prime minister reduced the duty on two occasions," Puri asserted.

Prices in neighbourhood countries are 15 to 25 per cent higher than in India. Equally, prices in Western Europe and US are much higher than in India, he said.

"The oil bill aims to resolve one of the biggest grievances of global oil companies interested in investing in India by providing stability in operation, both in terms of tenure of the lease and the condition. The bill does not alter the rights of the states, which will continue to give petroleum leases. The bill does not alter the existing playing field and offers no preference to either the private or the public sector," the minister said. —*PTI*

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in the Lok Sabha during the Budget session of Parliament, in New Delhi PHOTO: PTI

TMC, RJD RAKE UP DUPLICATE VOTER CARD ISSUE

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

The Trinamool Congress pressed for a short-duration discussion in the Rajya Sabha next week on the issue of duplicate voter card numbers.

Deputy Chairman Harivansh said as many as nine notices had been given but none have been accepted. "Members have already given notices on similar issues under other parliamentary devices which are likely to be discussed in due course," he said.

Senior RJD leader Manoj Kumar Jha too expressed concern over the issue and demanded that the Election Commission take a call on the extent of the duplication in the country. —*PTI*

TN continues fight against delimitation, NEP

NEW DELHI/CHENNAI 12 MARCH

Tamil Nadu ministers continued their opposition to the NEP and delimitation. DMK member DM Kathir Anand said the impending delimitation exercise penalises progressive states like Tamil Nadu which have controlled population growth.

"The government should consider economic performance and vital indices like GSDP, per capita income, infrastructure improvement and not just population while doing the delimitation," Anand said in the Lok Sabha during Zero Hour.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin termed the NEP a Saffron policy at a rally in the Tamil Nadu.

The DMK president further claimed that the NEP "does not accept reservation, which is social justice." In name of vocational education, the Centre was attempting to introduce caste-based education, he alleged.

Stalin on Tuesday dubbed the National Education Policy (NEP) a "destructive Nagpur plan." —*PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi offers 'Ganga Jal' into Ganga Talao, at the Ganga Talao in Mauritius, on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

Modi: India to assist Mauritius in maritime & police training

PORT LOUIS, 12 MARCH

Delving into strategic cooperation between India and Mauritius, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, every possible help will be provided to Mauritius to help it meet the needs of its Coast Guard and that New Delhi will assist in the establishment of a police academy and national maritime information sharing centre in the country.

India has been supporting the island nation in its efforts to reach a mutually beneficial deal with the UK over the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean.

In October last year, the UK announced handed over the sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius after more than half a century.

The prime minister also announced several development projects to be implemented in Mauritius with India's assistance. Work will be done to modernise the 100-kilometer-long water pipeline, he said.

In the second phase of community development projects, new projects worth 500 million Mauritian rupees would begin, he added.

India has close and long-standing relations with Mauritius, an island nation in the Western Indian Ocean.

A key reason for the special ties is the fact that Indian-origin people comprise nearly 70 per cent of the island nation's population of 1.2 million. —*PTI*

BJP sweeps Haryana civic polls, CM Saini says people want 'triple engine'

CHANDIGARH, 12 MARCH

BJP candidates secured emphatic wins in the Haryana civic polls. The candidates swept Ambala, Faridabad, Gurugram, Hisar, Karnal, Rohtak, Sonipat, and Panipat, defeating their nearest Congress rivals. The ruling party's candidate was also in a comfortable lead in Yamunanagar.

"The results prove that the people of Haryana want development, and they have cast their vote for good governance," Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said.

Saini added that the people have put their stamp of approval on the works and policies of the government, and the "triple engine government" will work at a fast pace to realise the dream of a "developed Haryana, developed India."

He added that the "triple engine government," will undertake development at three times the pace to realize the goal of a "Viksit Haryana, Viksit Bharat."

"I extend my congratulations to every worker of the BJP whose hard work, along with the blessings of the people of the state, has ensured that the triple engine government has been formed," he added.

Haryana Minister Vipul Goel, while speaking in the Assembly, said, "Our mayor candidates have won with a big majority in nine municipal corporations."

Goel also said that the Faridabad mayoral candidate had won by the highest vote margin. He further mentioned, "More than 90 percent of our councillors have won in the polls." —*PTI*

Nayab Singh Saini PHOTO: PTI

Bihar LoP Rabri Devi says Nitish 'high on bhaang'

PATNA, 12 MARCH

Following an intense spat with Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar the state legislative council Rabri Devi accused the chief minister of having come to the House after consuming "bhang" (cannabis).

Kumar, reacted to a question in the house saying, "The government is doing so much. The earlier governments did nothing."

This irked Rabri Devi, the leader of the opposition, "You claim no work was done before you took over. Please summon the records of that period. According to you, women did not even wear clothes before 2005."

The allusion was to a faux pas made by the JD(U) president more than once, while trying to underscore his push for empowering women.

Later, speaking outside the House, Rabri Devi alleged, "Nitish Kumar comes to the assembly under the influence of 'bhang'. He misbehaves with women. "

She added, "We have staged a walkout and we will boycott the House till Nitish stops insulting women."

Shortly afterwards, she was joined by Tejashwi Yadav, who said he felt "pity".

"Nitish gesticulates at the my mother's 'bindi' I have seen him gesticulating in a similar fashion at his own female ministers and legislators. He loses control in the presence of women. He should resign and, maybe, set up an ashram," Yadav said. —*PTI*

Youtuber told to remove Isha videos by HC

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

Delhi High Court on Wednesday ordered pulling down from online platforms videos and content published by YouTuber Shyam Meera Singh against Isha Foundation.

Justice Subramonium Prasad said the continuous circulation of the YouTube video, having a "clickbait" title, was likely to cause harm to the trust's reputation, and restrained Singh from further publishing his allegations.

The judge, in an interim order on Isha Foundation's lawsuit, directed X, Meta and Google to remove the alleged defamatory content against Jagadish "Jaggi" Vasudev aka Sadhguru's foundation.

The court prima facie said Singh chose to make the video based on "entirely unverified material" and the public from uploading it on social media till the next hearing in May.

Before uploading the video, he published tweets and posts to promote, the court said adding, "The title is clickbait. This court is of the view that the title was given to attract attention." —*PTI*

MP presents Rs 4.21 lakh cr Budget, no new taxes

BHOPAL, 12 MARCH

The Madhya Pradesh government presented a Rs 4.21 lakh crore budget for 2025-26 with no new taxes while announcing new schemes for development of religious sites.

Finance Minister Jagdish Devda presented the Rs 4,21,032 crore budget, a 15 per cent increase over the last fiscal.

To facilitate study of religious texts, literature and scientific research, state-of-the-art `Gita Bhawan' study centres will be built in all urban civic bodies, with a provision of Rs 100 crore.

Development of tourism in the state has not only promoted economic development but also created employment opportunities, the minister said, providing Rs 1,610 crore for `tourism, culture and religious affairs', an increase of Rs 133 crore over the last year.

A sum of Rs 47,296 crore (23.5 per cent increase) was allocated for Scheduled Tribes and Rs 32,633 crore (16.2 per cent increase) for Scheduled Castes. —*PTI*

Puducherry CM Rangasamy presents Rs 13,600 crore 'tax-free' budget

PUDUCHERRY, 12 MARCH

Puducherry Chief Minister N Rangasamy presented a Rs 13,600 crore "tax-free" budget for the fiscal 2025-26 in the territorial assembly.

Asum of Rs 11,624.72 crores had been allocated for Revenue Expenditure and Rs 1,975.28 crores had been allocated for capital expenditure.

The central government had conveyed its approval for net borrowing ceiling, including negotiated loan to the extent of Rs 2,101.42 crores to bridge the gap of the fiscal deficit.

The union territory's revenue receipts have been estimated at Rs 7,641,40 crores. Central assistance, including state disaster relief fund has been estimated at Rs 3,432.18 crores. The central road fund is Rs 25 crores and allocation under centrally sponsored scheme has been estimated as Rs 400 crores.

The percentage of capital expenditure against the total expenditure had been considerably increased to 9.80 per cent in the proposed budget for the fiscal 2025-26, an almost a 10 fold increase from 2021-22. —*PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

'KEEP TAMIL NAMES FOR KIDS'

Have more kids after marriage: TN DyCM

CHENNAI, 12 MARCH

DMK leader and Tamil Nadu Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin on Wednesday expressed concerns over the state's declining birth rate and its potential impact on parliamentary seat allocation, urging newlyweds to prioritise childbirth.

Attending a marriage function, after wishing the newlyweds, Udhayanidhi said, "We will win 200-plus seats in Tamil Nadu in the 2026 elections. I request the couples who are getting married to be concerned about childbirth as soon as possible. Our state implemented birth control first, and due to this, we are now facing issues. If delimitation comes, we will lose eight parliamentary constituencies, while northern states will gain more than 100 seats."

He further urged people to "Keep Tamil names for their children," emphasising the importance of preserving Tamil identity.

Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin PHOTO: X/ UDHAYANIDHI STALIN

His remarks come amid ongoing debates over the impact of delimitation on southern states, with political leaders voicing concerns over potential representation imbalances.

Earlier on 3 March, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin urged couples in the state to "give birth to a child immediately" to ensure greater representation in Parliament.

This move is a direct response to the Centre's plans for constituency delimitation on a 'pro-rata' basis, which Stalin believes will unfairly limit southern states' representation.

- Following his father's remarks, DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin urged newlywed couples to have children as soon as possible so Tamil Nadu would not lose parliamentary constituencies in the proposed delimitation. He was speaking at a mass wedding ceremony in Tamil Nadu

Addressing the marriage ceremony of a party worker's son, Stalin said that MPs count depends on population, adding that now he won't say don't rush to give birth to child.

Stalin emphasised that the number of MPs is directly tied to population, saying, "With 39 MPs, we are fighting for rights, with more MPs, we can achieve our thoughts" —*ANI*

Mamata accuses BJP of importing 'fake Hinduism'

KOLKATA, 12 MARCH

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee lashed out at Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari over his controversial remark on Muslim MLAs, accusing the BJP of importing "fake Hinduism" to the state.

She also expressed concern over the BJP's treatment of minorities and criticised the opposition party for allegedly undermining democratic values.

Banerjee's comments came a day after Adhikari claimed that if the BJP comes to power in West Bengal in the next assembly polls, Muslim MLAs from the Trinamool Congress (TMC) will be "thrown out" of the state assembly.

In response, Banerjee condemned the statement and remarked, "Your imported Hindu dharma is not supported by the Vedas or by our seers. How can you deny the rights of Muslims as citizens? This is nothing but a fraud. You are importing fake Hinduism."

Banerjee expressed concern over what she called the "BJP's attempt to manipulate religious sentiments for political gains", stressing that her version of Hinduism differed from theirs.

"I have the right to protect Hindu dharma, but not your version of it. Please don't play the Hindu card," she asserted.

The chief minister also questioned Adhikari's statement that the Hindu population would oust the TMC from power, stating, "How can your leader say that when Muslims win, you people will remove them from assembly? How can they dismiss 33 per cent of the population?"

"You can't manage a state like Manipur, how will you manage Bengal?" she questioned. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: ANI

Dalit minor boy's fingers severed for 'proposing' to girl

TIRUNELVELI, 12 MARCH

On 10 March, a 17-year-old Dalit boy was brutally arrested by three youths who intercepted his bus and severed his fingers in broad daylight. The victim suffered six cut injuries on his head and his three left hand fingers and the right-hand thumb was severed during the attack. The arrested persons told the police that the enmity was due to the victim's "love proposal," to a school going girl of their family. All the three accused, two minor boys and a 19-year-old youth, were arrested on Wednesday. One of the arrested minor assailant was the girls' brother. The incident occurred when the bus the bus was crossing the caste Hindu dominated village. The severed fingers were later reattached by plastic surgeons. *—PTI*

Delhi police arrest 24 Bangladeshis for illegal stay

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

Delhi Police have arrested 24 Bangladeshis from South East and South Delhi during an operation on Wednesday. 13 Bangladeshi were arrested in the South District, while 11 Bangladeshis were held in the South East District. Police are currently verifying the documents of more than 10 people in these areas. On 11 March, five Bangladeshi nationals were arrested by the Delhi police from different areas of the city for illegally residing in the country; two from the Sadar Bazar area and the remaining three from the outer district. All of them had also forget their documents, the police added. In January, Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena had launched a special mission to identify Bangladeshi immigrants living in the national capital. The operation is still ongoing. *—ANI*

Three arrested for impersonating Shah's son Jay

IMPHAL, 12 MARCH

Three persons, who were recently arrested from Uttarakhand for allegedly impersonating Union Home Minister Amit Shah's son and promising several Manipur MLAs the chief ministerial post for money, were brought to Imphal, police said. After the imposition of the President's rule in Manipur, several legislators had received phone calls from the three accused, who allegedly identified themselves as Jay Shah and offered the legislators a chief ministerial position for a sum of Rs 4 crore, a senior officer said. "They impersonated Jay Shah and had asked the MLAs for huge funds promising that they would be considered for the post of CM," the police said. *—PTI*

Search for workers in T'gana tunnel enters 19th day

NAGARKURNOOL, 12 MARCH

The search for seven people trapped inside the partially collapsed SLBC tunnel in Telangana continued for the 19th consecutive day on Wednesday, with intensified efforts. Rescue teams including personnel from NDRF, state-run miner Singareni Collieries, rat miners and other agencies entered the tunnel on Wednesday morning in a renewed effort to reach those trapped. As part of efforts rescue personnel once again deployed Human Remains Detection Dogs at the accident site. The eight individuals were trapped in the SLBC project tunnel after a portion of it collapsed on 22 February. Apart from the rescued body of Gurpreet Singh, the seven others still trapped include Manoj Kumar, Sunny Singh, Gurpreet Singh, Sandeep Sahu, Jegta Xess, and Anuj Sahu. —PTI

Guard up in Sambhal ahead of Holi revelry

Local authorities concerned as main event clashes with Friday Ramzan prayers in mosques

SAMBHAL, 12 MARCH

Sambhal district administration in Uttar Pradesh has ramped up security measures ahead of Holi celebrations, with extensive arrangements in place to ensure the peaceful conduct of festivals.

Sambhal District Magistrate Rajendra Pensia detailed the security measures, "The procession of fairs will be taken out tomorrow. We held peace committee meetings in every locality and village and two committee meetings at the district level. We have formed 27 quick response teams. We have created a total of six zones and 29 sectors and deployed magistrates and police officers in each one. The SHOs (station house officers) of every police station and all magistrates have been asked to patrol the hotspots. PAC (Provincial Armed Constabulary) battalions have been deployed for three-tier security as before. Surveillance has been ensured with CCTV cameras and drones."

On Monday, the day of Rangbhari Ekadashi, Holi celebrations began in Sambhal amid tight security. Rangbhari Ekadashi marks the beginning of the Holi celebrations and it continues for five days before the main festival of Holi.

A peace committee meeting was held 6 March at the Sambhal Kotwali police station in view of the upcoming main Holi event on 14 March.

As 14 March falls on a Friday, which coincides with the Friday prayers in mosques, more importantly it being the month of Ramzan, Sambhal Circle Officer (CO) Anuj Kumar Chaudhary urged the people who are uncomfortable with colours to remain indoors as the Hindu festival comes once a year.

"There are 52 'Jumma' (Fridays) in a year, but only one day for Holi. The Hindu community wait the whole year for Holi, just like Muslims wait for Eid. We have requested Muslims to stay indoors if they feel offended by the colours falling on them when people celebrate Holi. And if they want to go out of their houses, they should be kind enough not to object if colours fall on them," he said. *—ANI*

Security personnel keep vigil at the Jama Masjid in Sambhal *PHOTO: PTI*

A mosque in Shahjahanpur covered in tarpaulin *PHOTO: PTI*

Shahjahanpur Mosques get tarpaulin cover

SHAHJAHANPUR, 12 MARCH

Mosques on way of Laat Saheb Holi procession in the district have been covered with tarpaulins and a tight security has been put in place ahead of the festival of colours, which incidentally coincides with the Friday prayers.

An an 18th-century ritual, Holi in Shahjahanpur begins with revellers hurling footwear at a man impersonating Laat Saheb – a British Lord – seated on a bullock cart.

The local administration has installed barricades and CCTV cameras along the procession route. "There will be 18 Holi processions in the city, including two major Laat Saheb processions. The larger procession has been divided into three zones with around 100 magistrates keeping watch," said Superintendent of Police Rajesh S.

"The deployment includes 10 police circle officers, 250 sub-inspectors, around 1,500 police personnel and two companies of the Provincial Armed Constabulary," he added. *—PTI*

HC ASKS ASI TO WHITEWASH SAMBHAL MASJID IN A WEEK

PRAYAGRAJ, 12 MARCH

The Allahabad High Court on Wednesday directed the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) to complete whitewashing of the Jama Masjid in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal district within one week. After hearing counsels for the parties, Justice Rohit Ranjan Agarwal also directed the ASI to install lights on the outer portion of the mosque. Earlier on Monday, the Allahabad High Court had directed the counsel appearing for the ASI to come up with specific averments as to what prejudice would whitewashing the outer walls of the mosque cause. SFA Naqvi, counsel for the masjid committee, had submitted that "ASI till date, has not disclosed in its affidavit that it is denying the whitewashing, extra lighting and installation of decorative lights outside the disputed structure." He had also placed reliance upon the coloured photographs of the exterior portion of the disputed site showing the need of whitewashing. *—PTI*

Most of the Indians were freed during a recent crackdown on the cyber crime centres along Myanmar border with Thailand *PHOTO: X*

549 tricked with fake jobs return from Myanmar, Thailand

BANGKOK, 12 MARCH

The Indian Embassies in Thailand and Myanmar have secured the repatriation of 549 Indians who were lured by fake job offers. The two missions also advised Indians to thoroughly check the background of employers overseas and recruiting agents before accepting the job roles.

"The Indian Embassy in Thailand, in close coordination with Indian Embassy in Myanmar and local authorities, secured repatriation of 549 Indians through Mae Sot in Thailand to India on 10 and 11 March, 2025, by two special flights. They were rescued from scam centres operating in areas near the Myanmar–Thailand border," the Indian Embassy in Thailand posted on X.

The embassy further said that these people were forced to work in scam-centers in the neighbouring countries of Thailand.

"This is part of Government of India's sustained efforts to secure release and repatriation of Indian nationals who were lured with fake job offers and were made to work in scam-centers in the neighbouring countries of Thailand. Indian nationals are once again advised to verify credentials of foreign employers and check the antecedents of recruiting agents and companies, before taking up job offers."

Earlier on Tuesday, the Indian embassies in Myanmar and Thailand, in coordination with local authorities, secured the repatriation of 283 Indian nationals by an Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft from Mae Sot in Thailand. These people were made to indulge in cybercrime and engage in other fraudulent activities in scam centres operating in regions along the Myanmar-Thailand border, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement." *—ANI*

Kolkata police file case in Azad Kashmir graffiti row

KOLKATA, 12 MARCH

An FIR has been registered against unknown persons for their alleged involvement in putting up the "Azad Kashmir" graffiti on the Jadavpur University campus, police said on Wednesday.

"The suo motu case has been filed at Jadavpur Police Station under sections 61(2) and 152 –criminal conspiracy and acts endangering sovereignty, unity and integrity – of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)," the police officer said.

The graffiti in black, proclaiming "Azad Kashmir" and "Free Palestine" were seen on a wall near gate number three of the university on Monday, but it was not known who was behind it.

"These graffiti and posters are carrying messages which can hurt the sentiments of unity of the nation. Necessary action will be taken against those behind these," the officer said.

As a part of the probe, the police have prepared a list of students of the varsity, who could be questioned, he added.

Protests have been held for the past few days at Jadavpur University where two students were injured after the car of state Education Minister Bratya Basu and another accompanying vehicle allegedly grazed past them during a Left protest on the campus on March 1. *—PTI*

CLOSING THE DIVIDE

Members of some 150 Dalit families break caste taboos and offer prayers for the first time at the 500-year-old Gidheswar Shiv Temple in Katwa of Purba Bardhaman district of West Bengal on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

Father convicted for minor's rape kills self in jail

KHANDWA, 12 MARCH

A 38-year-old man, who had been convicted a week ago for the rape of his minor daughter committed suicide in the district jail here, an official said on Wednesday.

The man hanged himself using pajama strings in barrack number 2 around 4 pm on Tuesday, said jail superintendent Aditi Chaturvedi.

On 7 March, the Sessions Court had sentenced him to life imprisonment for raping his 11-year-old daughter in 2021, she said. He was in prison since his arrest after the crime.

A judicial inquiry has been ordered into his death, Chaturvedi said. *—PTI*

Wastewater pollution costs fishery sector $2.2B a year

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

India's fishery sector loses over USD 2B due to untreated wastewater contaminating waterways, says a study report published on Wednesday.

It also said the country suffers an annual economic loss of USD 246M from diarrhoea caused by contaminated drinking water due to poor wastewater management.

Launched at the World Ocean Summit in Japan by ocean health initiative Back to Blue and the Ocean Sewage Alliance, the study highlights the high cost of inaction in wastewater management in Brazil, India, Kenya, the Philippines and the United Kingdom.

Untreated or poorly treated wastewater is a major source of pollution and disease. When it enters rivers, oceans and drinking water supplies, the consequences are severe.

Among the five countries, India's fishery sector suffers the most, losing 5.4 per cent (USD 2.2B) of its economic value annually, followed by Kenya (5.1 per cent).

Since India is a major seafood supplier, this threatens both domestic food security and export markets.

Also, among the countries studied, India incurs the highest healthcare costs from diarrhoea linked to contaminated drinking water. With a wastewater treatment rate of just 21 per cent, nearly three times as many people are affected, resulting in annual costs of USD 246M.

Brazil faces severe agricultural impacts as crops like soybeans are highly sensitive to soil salinity, worsened by irrigation with untreated wastewater. *—PTI*

AFTER 22 YEARS

Mohan Babu accused of plotting chopper crash to kill Soundarya

HYDERABAD, 12 MARCH

About 22 years after the death of Kannada actor Soundarya in a plane crash, a complaint has been filed against Telugu actor Mohan Babu, media reports said on Wednesday.

The complaint was lodged by a social activist, who alleged that Babu was responsible for the accident.

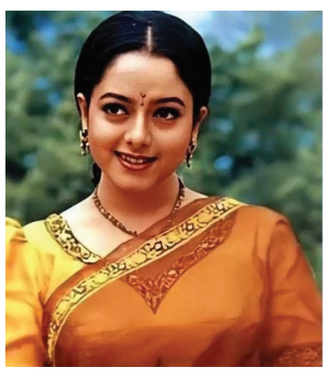
Soundarya, a popular actor in the South Indian film industry, died in a plane crash on 17 April, 2004, which also killed then chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, YS Rajasekhara Reddy.

The activist, a resident of Satyanarayanapuram village in Khammam district of Telangana, has sought a thorough investigation into the incident to determine if there was any foul play involved. He also alleged that Manchu Mohan Babu had "threatened him", and requested the police to provide him protection.

The activist also said in his complaint to the police that Mohan Babu had allegedly asked Soundarya to sell a guest house on a six-acre land in Jallepalli, Shamshabad, which her brother Amarnath objected to.

Soundarya, who was reportedly pregnant, and her brother were travelling from Bengaluru to campaign for a Telangana-based political party when they lost their lives in a helicopter crash. The incident left no concrete evidence behind.

In his complaint, the activist also alleged that Mohan Babu had been using the guest house in Jallepalli. He demanded that the government take possession of the property, ensure justice is served and take appropriate action against Mohan Babu. *—Agencies*



Soundarya and Mohan Babu *PHOTO: X*

UP court takes 40 yrs for conviction in mass murder

MAINPURI, 12 MARCH

Over four decades after 24 Dalit persons were killed by a gang of dacoits at Dihuli village in Uttar Pradesh's Mainpuri district, a local court has convicted three men for the crime.

"On Tuesday, special judge Indira Singh found Kaptan Singh, Ram Pal and Ram Sevak guilty of their roles in the Dihuli Dalit massacre," said government Counsel Pushpendra Singh Chauhan. The sentencing is slated for 18, he said.

The attackers shot and killed 24 persons, including women and children, and looted their belongings, he said.

An FIR was filed by Laik Singh, a local resident, on 19 November, 1981. After an investigation, 17 dacoits, including gang leaders Santosh and Radhey, were charged with the mass murder. During the trial, 13 of the 17 accused, including Santosh and Radhey, died.

Of the remaining four, one is still absconding. Kaptan Singh, Ram Sevak and Ram Pal faced the trial. *—PTI*

HC allows rape victim to abort 27-week pregnancy

JAIPUR, 12 MARCH

The Rajasthan High Court has allowed a 13-year-old rape survivor to medically terminate her pregnancy and observed that not permitting it would jeopardise her mental health.

Justice Sudesh Bansal passed the order on 10 March despite an 8 March report of a medical board, which opined that the termination of over 27-week pregnancy of the survivor would be "under high risk consent".

"Since petitioner is a minor girl and a rape victim, her parents are agreeable to give their consent to undergo operation to terminate the unwanted pregnancy of their daughter under the high risk of her life," the court said.

The high court underlined the possibility of a "grave injury to the mental health of petitioner" which couldn't be "brushed aside" if the unwanted pregnancy was not allowed to be terminated and she was forced to birth the child.

The birth would lead her to "face the agony" her entire life, including maintaining the child and other ancillary and connected issues, the court added. "Permission to terminate the pregnancy of the rape victim can be granted beyond the prescribed provisions of the Act of 1971, amended act of 2021, considering the peculiar facts and circumstances of individual case," the order said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

MEMORIES OF A DREAM

March for The Tibet Women's Uprising Day on 12 March in Dehradhun. The Tibet Women's Uprising day follows the Tibet Uprising Day, on 10 March, which commemorates the 1959 Tibetian Uprising against the Chinese presence in the region. The rebellion was crushed by the Chinese, resulting in the exile of the Dalia Lama to India
PHOTO: PTI

What the US ceasefire deal means for Ukraine

The United States' announcement that Ukraine has agreed to its proposal for a 30-day ceasefire with Russia, following peace talks in Saudi Arabia is a remarkable turn of events. The ball is now in Russia's court in terms of whether it accepts the ceasefire proposal.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's recent shouting match with U.S. President Donald Trump and Vice-President JD Vance in the White House, at a surface level, could not have been much worse from the Ukrainian leader's perspective. Both Trump and Vance subjected Zelenskyy to scathing attacks before their meeting abruptly ended.

The fallout from the meeting initially seemed even worse than the meeting itself. On 3 March, Trump paused material military aid to Ukraine, and two days later, the US stopped sharing intelligence with Ukrainians. The decision on intelligence has since been reversed following Ukraine's agreement with the ceasefire proposal.

When campaigning for president, Trump promised to end the war in 24 hours. After he won a second term, The domestic turmoil fuelled by many of his policies, however, has seemingly caused him to seek a win in international affairs. Enter Ukraine.

Nonetheless, Trump's increased focus on Ukraine in recent weeks, including his Oval Office attack on Zelenskyy, has required the Ukrainian leader to adapt. He's therefore been making moves to shore up support for Ukraine in a world devoid of American leadership.

Trump's fixation with Ukraine stems from several aspects of his world view.

First, while theories of Trump being a Russian agent may be overblown, he does seem fixated on Russian President Vladimir Putin. This fixation likely stems from the fact that Putin, much like Trump, views the world in a transactional manner. Putin is someone with whom Trump, who calls himself a deal-maker, can reach an agreement.

US President Donald Trump and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy ***PHOTO: ANI***

Second, the Russia-Ukraine conflict aligns with Trump's world view that the US provides too much and the rest of the world too little to secure international stability. This perspective is particularly the case with Europe, whom Trump views as "free-loading" via American security guarantees.

Third, Trump views Ukraine as having the potential to assist American industry and defence, just not in a military manner. The rare earth minerals that Ukraine possesses have significant economic and military implications, and the market is dominated by rival China.

Fourth and finally, Trump correctly views the US as having leverage over Ukraine. American military aid has largely allowed Ukraine to fight a protracted war against a much larger enemy. While the degradation of Russia's military and economy benefits the U.S., Trump's focus on short-term objectives largely overlooks this point.

Trump, however, did not account for Zelenskyy's strength of character. While Trump is seeking to use Ukraine for his own advantage, Zelenskyy remains focused on Ukraine's interests.

Given Trump's rhetoric towards Zelenskyy in the lead-up to that meeting, it's curious the Ukrainian leader agreed to the meeting at all. But Zelenskyy himself reportedly pushed for the meeting, and even had French President Emmanuel Macron intervene on his behalf.

American support for Ukraine was disappearing before the tumultuous meeting. There has been no new aid for Ukraine since Trump assumed the presidency. For Ukraine to survive, it needs a new patron.

Though not perfect, the renewed support from the EU and the UK may allow Ukraine to continue fighting as Russia's declining economy hinders Putin's war effort.

In the aftermath of the Oval Office showdown, Zelenskyy has done what he can to repair Ukraine's relationship with the U.S. and satiate Trump's ego, but tension remains. From Ukraine's perspective, it needs a new partner in its war against Russia, and the EU can serve that purpose.

The US may be the country pushing for a ceasefire in Ukraine, but it's Europe that will play the most vital role in Ukraine's ability to win the war. *—The Conversation*

SALAR

What is the row over the three-language formula?

- Tamil Nadu has fiercely opposed the three language formula for decades, viewing it as an attempt to impose Hindi in the state

The three-language formula proposed in the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, is at the centre of the political row between the DMK-led Tamil Nadu government and the central government. Here is an explanation of what the formula is:

What is three-language formula?
The three-language formula in NEP 2020 recommends that students learn three languages, at least two of which must be native to India.
This formula applies to both government and private schools, giving states the flexibility to choose languages without any imposition.

What is the history of three-language formula?
The formula was first proposed by the Education Commission (1964-66), officially known as the Kothari Commission. It was formally adopted in the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968 under then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.
The policy was reaffirmed in NPE 1986 under PM Rajiv Gandhi and revised in 1992 by Narasimha Rao's Congress government to promote linguistic diversity and national unity.
The formula included three languages — mother tongue or regional language, official language and a modern Indian or European language.

What does NEP 2020 say about three-language formula?
The NEP proposes an "early implementation of the three-language formula to promote multilingualism" from the school level.
The document states that the three-language formula will continue to be implemented "while keeping in mind the Constitutional provisions, aspirations of the people, regions, and the Union, and the need to promote multilingualism as well as promote national unity."
However, the NEP also states that there will be greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and no language will be imposed on any state. The policy states that the three languages learned by children will be the choices of states, regions, and of course, the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India.

What about foreign languages?
According to NEP 2020, in addition to Indian languages and English, students at the secondary level can also learn Korean, Japanese, French, German and Spanish, among other foreign languages.

What is Tamil Nadu's opposition?
The state has historically opposed the three-language formula.
In 1937, the then Madras government, headed by C Rajagopalachari, introduced compulsory Hindi in schools.
This move sparked widespread protests by the Justice Party and Dravidian leaders like Periyar. The policy was revoked in 1940, but anti-Hindi sentiments persisted.
When the three-language formula was introduced in 1968, Tamil Nadu opposed it, seeing it as an attempt to impose Hindi. Under Chief Minister C N Annadurai, the state adopted a two-language policy, teaching only Tamil and English. Tamil Nadu remains the only state that has never implemented the three-language formula, choosing English over Indian languages, including Hindi and other regional languages.

What is the fresh trigger?
Tamil Nadu's refusal to implement key aspects of NEP 2020, particularly the three-language formula, has resulted in the Centre withholding Rs 573 crore in central education assistance under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). According to policy rules, states must comply with NEP guidelines to receive SSA funding, of which 60 per cent is provided by the Centre to states like Tamil Nadu. *—PTI*

DMK leaders protesting against the NEP's three-language formula ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

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Here's why rising anxiety over recession is roiling markets

Stock markets are plunging, consumers and businesses have started to sour on the economy, and economists are marking down their estimates for growth this year, with some even seeing rising odds of a recession.

The tech-heavy Nasdaq stock index slipped into a correction last week, defined as a 10 per cent drop from its most recent peak. The broader S&P 500 neared that level Tuesday.

It's a sharp shift from just a month ago, when stock indices were at record highs and consumer sentiment was rapidly improving. Many business executives were optimistic that President Donald Trump would cut taxes and pursue deregulation, which they expected would bolster growth.

Instead, Trump has aggressively implemented tariffs - and tariff threats - against the United States' largest trading partners. On Tuesday, Trump boosted import taxes on steel and aluminum from Canada to 50 per cent, from 25 per cent, in response to Ontario's imposition of duties on electricity it sends to the United States.

For now, the economy appears to be stable. Stock prices often fluctuate and sharp, temporary drops typically don't harm the economy. Most analysts still think the chances of a recession are fairly small. Goldman Sachs expects slower growth this year than last but still puts the odds of a recession at just 20 per cent.

Still, fears of a downturn are rising as investors, economists, and business executives are realising that Trump's import taxes are much more at the forefront of his economic policy this time than his last term in the White House. Tax cuts and deregulation appear for now to be on the back-burner. During Trump's first term, tax cuts came before the import duties.

Tariffs can slow the economy in a variety of ways: By raising prices for consumers, they can slow spending. Businesses may pull back on investing in new projects if they face higher costs from tariffs. And the uncertainty from Trump's on-again, off-again approach can also cause firms to delay hiring and investment.

"The longer the tariffs stay on, the more the risk of recession grows," says Luke Tilley, chief economist at M&T Bank/ Wilmington Trust.

There aren't really any signs a recession is imminent but one development that has sparked widespread fears is a real-time economy tracker maintained by the Federal Reserve's Atlanta branch. Last week it showed a sharp downshift and is now projecting that the US economy will shrink at an annual rate of 2.4 per cent in the first three months of this year.

US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and President Donald Trump at the White House Crypto Summit ***PHOTO: PTI***

Most economists still expect the US economy to expand in the first quarter, though at a slower pace.

Still, Harvard University economist Larry Summers, a former treasury secretary for the Clinton administration, on Monday put the odds of a recession at 50-50.

"All the emphasis on tariffs and all the ambiguity and uncertainty has both chilled demand and caused prices to go up," Summers posted on X. "We are getting the worst of both worlds -- concerns about inflation and an economic downturn and more uncertainty about the future and that slows everything."

Typically, a recession occurs when some short of shock hits the economy, such as the pandemic in 2020, or the bursting of the housing bubble in 2007. It's not yet clear that tariffs will have a large enough impact to knock the economy into reverse.

Dan North, senior economist at Allianz Trade Americas, a financial services firm, doesn't expect a recession, but says a "full-blown trade war" with all Trump's proposed tariffs sparking retaliation by other countries overseas "could constitute a shock".

Trump helped spark the sharp market selloff Monday by refusing to rule out a recession.

When asked whether he expected a recession this year, Trump said, "I hate to predict things like that. There is a period of transition because what we're doing is very big."

The import taxes Trump is threatening to impose this time are far more sweeping than the duties he put in place in 2018-2019, which were mostly focused on China and a few targeted items, such as steel, aluminum, and washing machines.

Now, Trump has placed 20 per cent duties on all imports from China, has threatened to impose 25 per cent tariffs on all imports from Canada and Mexico - the United States' two largest trading partners - and also says the US will place reciprocal tariffs on all countries that have tariffs on US exports, including Europe, India, and Japan.

All told, Jan Hatzius, chief economist at Goldman Sachs, estimates that the average US tariff on imported items could rise 10 percentage points as a result, five times the increase he imposed in his first term.

Other things also could take a toll on the economy: Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency is seeking to cut tens of thousands of federal government jobs and cut government spending, which could weigh on the economy. Major commercial airlines said that they are seeing a slowdown in government travel.

The clearest signal that a recession has begun would be a steady rise in job losses and a surge in unemployment. Companies generally stop hiring, and sometimes lay off workers. The unemployment rate did tick up last month, to 4.1 per cent from 4 per cent, though that is still quite low. But employers added 151,000 jobs, a sign that businesses are still seeking to add workers.

However, a recession isn't declare until well after one has begun, sometimes as long as a year afterward. *—PTI*

Ailing Hong Kong publisher Lai's son calls for his release

WASHINGTON, 12 MARCH

The son of prominent Hong Kong former publisher Jimmy Lai, who is facing possible life imprisonment in the Chinese city, called for his father's release in a high-profile national security case. Sebastien Lai, in a meeting with reporters in Washington, said the prison conditions where his 77-year-old diabetic father is being held in solitary confinement are "inhumane for anybody, any age." "There is a real fear that he might pass away at any time," said the son, who is leading an international campaign to free his father who founded the now defunct Apple daily newspaper known for its anti-Beijing stance. The case has drawn widespread international condemnation and is seen as evidence of the erosion of press freedom and judicial independence in Hong Kong. *—PTI*

Pope Francis makes progress recovering in Rome

ROME, 12 MARCH

The recovery of Pope Francis from double pneumonia continued Wednesday as he inched toward notching some important milestones in his papacy: The 12th anniversary Thursday of his election as pope and a near-record in hospital stays for a pontiff. The Vatican said Wednesday that Francis had a quiet night at Rome's Gemelli hospital. If the last few days are any guide, the 88-year-old Argentine will likely follow the Vatican's spiritual retreat remotely while his physical and respiratory therapy continues. Doctors have said Francis is making slow, gradual improvements and this week declared that he's no longer in imminent danger of death as a result of the complex respiratory infection he had when he was admitted on 14 February. Another medical update is expected later Wednesday.*—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Philippines ex-prez faces ICC charges for war on drugs

THE HAGUE, 12 MARCH

Former Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte was being flown to the Netherlands on Wednesday to face an International Criminal Court charge of crimes against humanity linked to the deadly crackdown on drugs he oversaw. Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said that police arrested Duterte when he returned from a trip to Hong Kong and sent him to the ICC. When he arrives in the Netherlands, he will be taken to the court's detention unit inside a Dutch prison complex near the North Sea coast. ICC opened an inquiry in 2021 into mass killings linked to so-called war on drugs overseen by Duterte. Estimates of the death during Duterte's term vary between 6,000 and up to 30,000. *—PTI*

Captain of cargo ship that hit US tanker is Russian

LONDON, 12 MARCH

The captain of a cargo ship 'Solong' that collided with a US tanker is a Russian national who remains in UK custody. The ship had failed several safety checks last year. The 59-year-old man, was arrested by police in northeast England on suspicion of manslaughter by gross negligence over the collision which sent jet fuel pouring into the sea sparking fears of significant environmental damage. Shipping company Ernst Russ, which owns Solong, said that the ship's crew were a mix of Russian and Filipino nationals. UK authorities say there was no evidence of foul play. Cargo Ship 'Solong', bound from Scotland, to Netherlands, hit a stationary tanker, anchored 16 kms off the English coast. *—PTI*

Trump says onus on Russia to accept ceasefire deal

US lifts its suspension of military aid to Ukraine

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 12 MARCH

US President Donald Trump says the 30-day ceasefire deal is a positive step **PHOTO: PTI**

President Donald Trump said he is hopeful that Russia will agree to a 30-day ceasefire with Ukraine even as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday termed it as a positive step and said it is up to the United States to convince Russia to accept it.

Senior officials from the US and Ukraine held talks in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday focusing on ending the over three-year war between Moscow and Kyiv, which gave an indication to accept a 30-day ceasefire.

"A while ago, Ukraine has agreed to the ceasefire. Now we go to Russia and hopefully President Putin will agree to it also," Trump said here soon after the Jeddah announcement. "If we get Russia to do it, that will be great. If we can't, we keep going on and on and people are going to get killed," he said in another video posted on his Truth Social account in an apparent reference to Steve Witkoff, his special envoy's likely visit to Moscow to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin.

President Zelensky said the American side understands his country's arguments and considers their proposals and added that he is 'grateful to President Trump for the constructive conversation between our teams.'

"Ukraine is ready to accept this proposal—we see it as a positive step and are ready to take it. Now, it is up to the United States to convince Russia to do the same. If Russia agrees, the ceasefire will take effect immediately," Zelensky said hours after the announcement came from Jeddah.

Meanwhile, soon after the announcement coming in from Jeddah, the Trump government lifted its suspension of military aid and intelligence sharing with Ukraine, measures that were imposed a week ago in an apparent effort to push Zelensky for talks about ending the war. There has been no official reaction from Russia as yet. *—PTI*

TRADE WARS

Trump imposes sweeping tariffs: Europe retaliates

WASHINGTON/ BRUSSELS/ MELBOURNE, 12 MARCH

President Donald Trump officially increased tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports to 25 per cent on Wednesday, promising that the taxes would help create US factory jobs at a time when his seesawing tariff threats are jolting the stock market and raising fears of an economic slowdown.

While EU retaliated with its own countermeasures, the Australian Government has chosen not to retaliate as it termed the tariffs as a 'recipe for slow growth and inflation' which only affect consumers.

Trump removed all exemptions from his 2018 tariffs on the metals, in addition to increasing the tariffs on aluminum from 10 per cent threatening higher inflation.

The US president has separate tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China, with plans to also tax imports from the European Union, Brazil and South Korea by charging "reciprocal" rates starting on April 2. Trump told CEOs in the Business Roundtable on Tuesday that the tariffs were causing companies to invest in US factories.

The European Union announced its own countermeasures on Wednesday, saying they will enter into force on April 1, after the Trump administration officially increased tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports to 25%.

"As the US are applying tariffs worth 28 billion dollars, we are responding with countermeasures worth 26 billion euros (USD 28 billion)," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement.

"We will always remain open to negotiation. We firmly believe that in a world fraught with geopolitical and economic uncertainties, it is not in our common interest to burden our economies with tariffs," Leyen said.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said that US tariffs on Australian steel and aluminum were unjustified, but his government would not retaliate with its own tariffs. He said they would continue to seek an exemption as they secured one during the previous Trump administration. *—PTI*

Pak train hijack: 300+ hostages rescued, 30 terrorists killed

BALOCHISTAN, 12 MARCH

An injured passenger rescued by security forces from a passenger train attacked by insurgents in Balochistan province Pakistan **PHOTO: PTI**

Security forces rescued over 300 passengers from a hijacked train, killing 30 Baloch militants in Pakistan's restive Balochistan, as they continued to battle heavily-armed insurgents for a second day on Wednesday. Some hostages were reportedly killed.

The Jaffar Express, carrying some 400 passengers in nine coaches, was going from Quetta to Peshawar when militants derailed it using explosives and hijacked it.

The Baloch Liberation Army claimed responsibility for the attack on Tuesday when they said they killed six soldiers. However, there has been no confirmation from the Pakistani authorities on casualties.

The security forces, including the military and frontier corps, are battling the militants who took control of the train near the mountainous terrain of Gudalar and Piru Kunri in a tunnel 160kms from Quetta.

The Balochistan government spokesman, Shahid Rind, said the operation would continue until all passengers were rescued.

Officials said that some of the militants wearing vests loaded with explosives had formed groups of women and children and forced them to sit near them. Due to the presence of women and children with the suicide bombers, the operation was being conducted with utmost caution.

The security source said it was not yet clear how many militants were involved in the attack. Pakistan Railways had resumed train services to Peshawar from Quetta after a suspension of more than a month and a half. *—PTI*

'We stopped breathing': Survivors recall the horror

ISLAMABAD, 12 MARCH

There was a huge explosion and firing, a scene that can never be forgotten, said Mushtaq Muhammad, a survivor, as he recounted the moment when Baloch militants attacked a passenger train in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province.

The Balochistan Liberation Army have claimed responsibility for the attack.

Ishaq Noor, who was travelling with his family, pulled one of his children under him while his wife pulled the other under her so that "if a bullet hits us, the children will be saved."

He said the firing lasted for about 50 minutes and during this time, they were unable to breathe, not knowing what would happen.

He said the attackers were talking to each other in Balochi and their leader was repeatedly telling them to keep a special eye on the security personnel.

He said, one person who resisted was tortured and taken down. After that, everyone followed their instructions.

Muhammad Ashraf, another passenger, said most of the people had left their luggage on the train, while some were carrying it.

"According to my estimate, they (the extremists) had taken around 250 people with them and the number of attackers was also around 1,100," Ashraf said.

"It was a scene of doomsday." he added. *—PTI*

Somali forces end terrorists' 24-hour siege on hotel

MOGADISHU, 12 MARCH

Somali security forces on Wednesday ended a 24-hour siege at a hotel in the central city of Beledwyne, leaving an unknown number of people dead, including all the al-Shabab militants who launched the attack.

The attack began when a car bomb exploded at the Cairo Hotel, which houses traditional elders and military officers involved in coordinating the government's offensive against al-Shabab.

The mayor of Beledweyne, Omar Alasow said security forces had "successfully ended the siege" and that six al-Shabab militants died. It is still unclear how many civilians were killed.

The al-Qaida-affiliated al-Shabab claimed responsibility for the attack. Al-Shabab, which opposes Somalia's government, frequently carries out bombings. *—ANI*

Centre-right party wins Greenland's election

NUUK, 12 MARCH

The centre-right Demokraatit Party won the most votes in Greenland's parliamentary elections, a surprise result as the territory went to the polls in the shadow of US President Donald Trump's stated goal of taking control of the island.

Both Demokraatit, the Democrats, and the second place party, Naleraq: "Point of Orientation" favour independence from Denmark but differ on the pace of change. Demokraatit's upset victory on Wednesday over parties representing local innuits that have governed the territory for years indicates that many in Greenland care just as much about health care, education, cultural heritage and other social policies.

"I think this is a historic result in Greenland's political history," Demokraatit party leader Jens-Frederik Nielsen said at the election party after the results.

Greenlandic newspaper Sermitsiaq wrote that Nielsen, 33, appeared to be surprised by his party's gains, with photos showing him sporting a huge grin and applauding at the election party.

"We had not expected that the election would have this outcome," Nielsen told Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation KNR TV. "We are very happy."

Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen congratulated the Demokraatit party and said the future government would likely have to "deal with massive pressure from Trump". —PTI

MUSK'S DAUGHTER SAYS HE CHOOSES KIDS BY IVF SEX SELECTION

WASHINGTON, 12 MARCH

PHOTO: X

Elon Musk trans daughter, Vivian Wilson slammed the billionaire tech giant for allegedly using sex selective In-Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) for his children.

Gender selection in IVF is done through Preimplantation Genetic Techniques which analyses the embryos for sex chromosomes before implantation, allowing parents to choose embryos of the desired gender. In India, this practice is strictly illegal.

"My assigned sex at birth was a commodity that was bought and paid for. So when I was feminine as a child and then turned out to be transgender, I was going against the product that was sold," the 20-year-old wrote via Threads."That expectation of masculinity that I had to rebel against all my life was a monetary transaction," she said.

In a follow-up post, Wilson asked, "How the f–k is this legal."

Musk has not replied to the comment.

Wilson came out as transgender in June 2022 when she filed a request to change her first name and take the last name of her mom, Justine Wilson. The filing listed the reason as "gender identity and the fact that I no longer wish to be related to my biological father in any way, shape or form."

Two years later, Musk, 53, claimed he had been deceived into allowing Vivian's medical gender reassignment."I was essentially tricked into signing documents for one of my older boys, Xavier," he told psychologist Dr. Jordan Peterson in a interview, using Vivian's deadname. *—Agencies*

French publishers sue Meta for copyright violation

PARIS, 12 MARCH

PHOTO: X

French publishers and authors on Wednesday said that they're taking Meta to court, accusing the social media company of using their works without permission to train its artificial intelligence model.

Three trade groups said they were launching legal action against Meta in a Paris court over what they said was the company's "massive use of copyrighted works without authorisation" to train its generative AI model.

The National Publishing Union, which represents book publishers, has noted that "numerous works" from its members are turning up in Meta's data pool, the group's president, Vincent Montagne, said in a joint statement.

Montagne accused Meta of "noncompliance with copyright and parasitism".

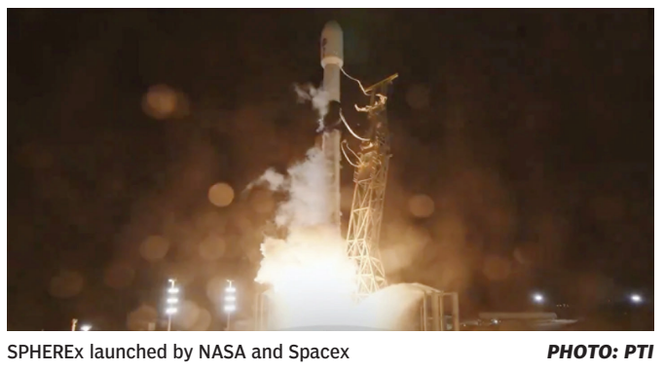
Another group, the National Union of Authors and Composers, which represents 700 writers, playwrights and composers, said the lawsuit was necessary to protect members from "AI which plunders their works and cultural heritage to train itself".

The third group involved in the lawsuit, the Societe des Gens de Lettres, represents authors. They all demand the "complete removal" of data directories Meta created without authorisation to to train its AI model. *—PTI*

COLOURFUL MAP OF COSMOS

NASA's newest space telescope blasts off to map sky, millions of galaxies

VANDENBERG SPACE FORCE BASE, 12 MARCH



SPHEREx launched by NASA and Spacex **PHOTO: PTI**

NASA's newest space telescope rocketed into orbit on Wednesday to map the entire sky like never before — a sweeping look at hundreds of millions of galaxies and their shared cosmic glow.

SpaceX launched SPHEREx observatory from California, putting it on course to fly over Earth's poles. Tagging along were four suitcase-size satellites to study the sun. SPHEREx popped off the rocket's upper stage first, drifting into the blackness of space.

The USD 488 million SPHEREx mission aims to explain how galaxies formed and evolved over billions of years, and how the universe expanded in its first moments.

Closer to home in our own Milky Way galaxy, SPHEREx will hunt for water and other ingredients of life.

The cone-shaped SPHEREx, at 500kgs, will take six months to map the entire sky with its infrared eyes and wide field of view. Four full-sky surveys are planned over two years, as the telescope circles the globe from pole to pole 650kms up.

SPHEREx won't see galaxies in exquisite detail like NASA's larger and more elaborate space telescopes.

Instead of counting galaxies or focusing on them, SPHEREx will observe the total glow produced by the whole lot, including the earliest ones formed in the wake of the universe-creating Big Bang.

The telescope's infrared detectors will be able to distinguish 102 colors invisible to the human eye, yielding the most colorful map ever made of the cosmos. *—PTI*

Gold slightly up on retail buying, silver rallies Rs 1,300

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

Gold prices were marginally up in the national capital on Wednesday amid modest retail buying as well as jewellery offtake, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity rose by Rs 60 to Rs 88,850 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 88,790 per 10 grams on Tuesday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity advanced by Rs 60 to Rs 88,450 per 10 grams. Silver price climbed by Rs 1,300 to hit nearly a three-week high of Rs 1,00,200 per kg. It had settled at Rs 98,900 per kg in the previous market close. In international markets, gold traded flat at USD 2,915.73 per ounce. —*PTI*

PHOTO:FREEPIK

Rupee inches up 2P to close at 87.19 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 12 MARCH

The rupee advanced 2 paise to close at 87.19 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday amid volatile global sentiment on tariff uncertainties and some recovery in the American currency index. Forex analysts said an upward move in crude oil prices also impacted the local unit and capped its gain as selling pressure in domestic equity and outflow of foreign capital continued. At the inter-bank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 87.24 and touched the intraday low of 87.32 against the greenback. The unit also hit the day's high of 87.17 before ending the session at 87.19 (provisional) against the dollar, 2 paise higher from its previous session's closing level. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading higher by 0.18 per cent at 103.45. —*PTI*

Riyadh Air will explore ties with AI, IndiGo: CEO

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

Riyadh Air, which plans to commence operations this year, will explore partnerships with Air India and IndiGo to tap the potential of the Indian market, a top executive said on Wednesday. The Saudi Arabian airline has ambitious expansion plans and will have wide-body B787-9 Dreamliners and narrow-body A321 neos in its fleet. It will also have extra wide-body B777Xs or A350-1000s. Riyadh Air CEO Tony Douglas said Indian subcontinent is "super important" and will explore possible partnership with Air India and IndiGo. Around 1.5 million tourists from India visited Saudi Arabia last year and the numbers are growing. India is one of the world's fastest growing civil aviation markets. According to Douglas, the airline will start operations later this year.—*PTI*

WazirX partners with BitGo Trust for fund security

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

Troubled Indian cryptocurrency exchange WazirX has partnered with BitGo Trust Company -- a regulated digital asset custodian and infrastructure provider -- to improve security of funds on its platform and rebuild user trust. In July 2024, WazirX parent firm Zettai Pte suffered a theft in which over USD 230 million was stolen from its platform. This incident left many users, known as creditors, with substantial financial losses. The collaboration aims to highlight the measures being taken to restore user trust, a company statement said. WazirX has already frozen an initial tranche of stolen assets worth USDT 3 million, as of January 2025. The said scheme establishes a structured approach for reorganising the liabilities associated with WazirX to optimise returns for all platform users.—*PTI*

Rivals to partners: After Airtel, Jio signs deal with Starlink

Satellite internet deal comes weeks after PM met Musk in US

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

PHOTO:WIKIPEDIA

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Jio announced a pact with Elon Musk's SpaceX to bring Starlink satellite internet services in India, a surprise move that follows months of bickering over how Musk's venture should be granted spectrum.

The deal with Musk - considered the right-hand-man to US President Donald Trump - comes a day after telecom tycoon Sunil Bharti Mittal's Bharti Airtel signed a similar partnership deal with SpaceX. Rivals Jio and Airtel had come together to demand an auction for awarding spectrum for satellite services in India as they feared an administrative allocation will give Musk airwaves at a price lower than what they had paid via auctions in the past.

This agreement "is subject to SpaceX receiving its own authorisations to sell Starlink in India", Jio Platforms - the company that holds telecom and digital properties of Reliance group - said in a statement on Wednesday.

Jio will offer Starlink equipment through its retail outlets as well as through its online storefronts. Jio and SpaceX will also explore how they can boost each other's offerings.

The deals by Airtel and Jio come weeks after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Musk in Washington to discuss issues including space, mobility, technology and innovation. During the trip, the prime minister had also met Trump, whose administration has upped the ratchet on tariffs against countries including India.

Ambani, chairman and managing director of Reliance Industries Ltd, was one of the select few invitees at the Trump's inauguration.

Both Jio, India's largest wireless carrier, and Airtel, the No 2 player in the world's most-populous nation where data usage is rapidly rising, feared lower entry cost will chip away some of their subscriber base.

Their deals announced within 12 hours of each underscoring Musk's growing political and business clout in the current US administration. As the head of the nascent Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), the world's richest man has emerged as a dominant force in Trump's second term.

Jio and SpaceX are also evaluating other complementary areas of cooperation to leverage their respective infrastructure to further enhance India's digital ecosystem. —*PTI*

> **Just like 4G, 5G, and 6G in the future, we will now have one more technology in our mix, i.e. SAT-G. Soon customers will be able to carry their mobiles to the remotest part of the world, with them in the skies and blue oceans**
>
> -Sunil Mittal, Bharti Group founder

IN FY26

India's GDP growth to exceed 6.5 %: Moody's

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

Moody's Ratings on Wednesday said India's economic growth will exceed 6.5 per cent in the next fiscal, up from 6.3 per cent this year, on higher government capex and consumption boost from tax cuts and interest rate reduction.

Projecting a stable outlook for the banking sector, Moody's said although the operating environment of Indian banks will remain favourable in the next fiscal, their asset quality will deteriorate moderately after substantial improvements in recent years, with some stress in unsecured retail loans, microfinance loans and small business loans.

Banks' profitability will remain adequate as declines in net interest margins (NIMs) are likely to be marginal amid modest rate cuts, it said.

Moody's said that following a temporary slowdown in mid-2024, India's economic growth is expected to reaccelerate and record one of the fastest rates among large economies globally.

The finance ministry's Economic Survey has projected GDP growth for next fiscal at 6.3-6.8 per cent. As per official estimates, GDP growth in the current fiscal would be 6.5 per cent.

The country's real GDP growth slowed to 5.6 per cent in the July-September 2024 quarter before rebounding to 6.2 per cent in the following quarter.

Moody's expects India's average inflation rate to decline to 4.5 per cent in fiscal 2025-26 from 4.8 per cent in the previous year.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raised its policy rate by 250 basis points from May 2022 to February 2023 to tame inflation, which has gradually led to increases in interest rates for borrowers. —*PTI*

Mkts end moderately lower on selling in IT, telecom stocks

MUMBAI, 12 MARCH

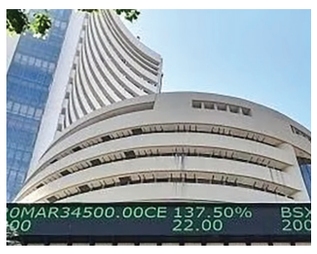


PHOTO:PTI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed moderately lower on Wednesday due to heavy selling pressure in IT, telecom, and realty stocks amid growing concerns over a possible global economic slowdown.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 72.56 points or 0.10 per cent to close at 74,029.76. During the session, it tumbled 504.16 points or 0.68 per cent to touch a low of 73,598.16.

Similarly, the NSE Nifty slipped 27.40 points or 0.12 per cent to end at 22,470.50. In the session, it fell 168.35 points or 0.74 per cent to hit an intraday low of 22,329.55.

From the Sensex pack, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Nestle India, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Technologies, Asian Paints, Axis Bank, Zomato, Hindustan Unilever, and Bharti Airtel were among the laggards.

On the other hand, IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank, ITC, Sun Pharma, Bajaj Finserv and UltraTech Cement were the gainers.

The BSE Smallcap gauge fell 0.48 per cent, while the midcap index slipped 0.57 per cent.

Among the BSE sectoral indices, Focussed IT, IT, Teck, Realty, Telecommunication, Metal, Capital Goods, Services, and Industrial were among the major laggards.

In contrast, Energy, FMCG, financial services, Healthcare, Utilities, Auto, Bankex, Consumer Durables, Oil & Gas, and Power were the gainers.

In Asian markets, Tokyo, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended on a mixed note.

European markets were trading higher in the mid-session deals on Wednesday. Wall Street ended in the negative zone on Tuesday.

Global benchmark Brent crude oil went up 0.34 per cent to USD 69.80 a barrel. —*PTI*

Equity MF inflow drops 26% to Rs 29,303 cr in Feb

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

Inflow in equity mutual funds dropped 26 per cent to Rs 29,303 crore in February, primarily due to a significant decline in investments in small and midcap schemes, amid continued market volatility.

This was the second consecutive month of decline in inflow in equity funds. The latest fund infusion by investors also marks the 47th consecutive month of net inflows into the segment.

According to data released by Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) on Wednesday, equity-oriented mutual funds saw an inflow of Rs 29,303 crore in February, way lower than Rs 39,688 crore registered in January and Rs 41,156 crore in December.

Within the equity categories, sectoral/thematic funds witnessed highest net inflow of Rs 5,711 crore, followed by Flexi Cap Funds with Rs 5,104 crore.

Apart from equities, gold exchange traded funds (ETFs) saw an inflow of Rs 1,980 crore as against Rs 3,751 crore in January.

However, debt funds registered an outflow of Rs 6,525 crore last month after experiencing an inflow of Rs 1.28 lakh crore in January.

Overall, mutual funds attracted over Rs 40,000 crore in the month under review as compared to a staggering inflow of Rs 1.87 lakh crore in January.

This has dragged the overall assets under management of mutual funds to Rs 64.53 lakh crore in February-end as compared to Rs 67.25 lakh crore in the preceding month. —*PTI*

Vedanta repays $900M loan, cuts debt by $550M

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

Mining conglomerate Vedanta Ltd repaid a USD 900 million high-cost loan through a mix of QIP proceeds and a new USD 350 million facility at a lower interest rate, resulting in USD 550 million net deleveraging and further strengthening of its balance sheet, sources said.

The loan, taken by subsidiary THL Zinc Ventures in May 2023 at 13.9 per cent interest, was partly repaid using funds from Vedanta's USD 1 billion June 2024 QIP.

Besides, Vedanta raised a new USD 350 million loan at 9.6 per cent per annum from JP Morgan and other bankers, reducing annual interest costs by USD 90 million, sources aware of the matter said.

Meanwhile, its parent company Vedanta Resources Ltd (VRL) has reduced its debt to USD 4.9 billion - its lowest level in a decade.

In February, Vedanta raised Rs 2,600 crore via unsecured non-convertible debentures (NCDs) at 9.40-9.50 per cent coupon rate, attracting institutional investors. —*PTI*

PHOTO:X

Ola Electric cuts costs by ₹90 cr/month, eyes EBITDA

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

Ola Electric on Wednesday said it has successfully completed a company-wide initiative to reduce cost and improve customer experience.

The company has successfully implemented Network Transformation and Opex Reduction programme, a company-wide initiative launched in November 2024, Ola Electric Mobility said in a statement.

The programme encompassed distribution network transformation projects like shutting all regional warehouses and shipping vehicles, spare parts and accessories from the factory directly to stores, automating registration and other processes, and productivity improvements in the sales and service network.

In addition to cost savings, the changes have resulted in reducing average vehicle inventory from around 35 to 20 days, and reducing delivery time for customers from 12 days to 3-4 days, Ola Electric said.

The vehicle registration process transformation is in its final stages, it added.

The company's daily registrations have improved significantly, increasing to over 800 per day, it claimed.

Shares of Ola Electric Mobility were trading 0.22 per cent up at Rs 51.02 apiece on BSE. —*PTI*

52% employees experience burnout due to poor work-life balance

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

About 52 per cent of employees experience burnout due to poor work-life balance, showed a survey conducted in five states in India by New York-based business process management player Vertex Group.

As employees navigate the challenges of a post-pandemic world, the survey reveals that 52 per cent of employees experience burnout due to poor work-life balance, Vertex Group said in a statement.

The insights uncover what workers desire from their workspace, highlighting a growing demand for flexible working hours and a healthier balance between personal and professional duties, it said.

The survey also revealed that over 23 per cent of employees work beyond the regular working hours.

It said, the mental well-being of employees is crucial for the organisation's growth and the recent untimely passing of several business leaders and employees due to work-related stress highlights the urgent need to prioritise health in high-stress occupations.

The survey also uncovered a striking finding that over 20 per cent of employees are productive for merely 2.5 to 3.5 hours during an 8–9-hour shift. —*PTI*

'$600B boost for Indian startups in 3 years'

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

India can expect over USD 600 billion in alternative investments in next three years to fuel the startup ecosystem, according to experts.

This influx of capital is anticipated to foster innovation, support entrepreneurship, and create an enabling environment for new ventures to thrive, they said at the launch of Centre for Financial Markets (CFM) by IMT in Mumbai last week.

India's startup ecosystem is poised for significant growth, with projections indicating that over USD 600 billion in private equity and venture capital (PE/VC) investments will flow into the country over the next three years, Atish Chattopadhyay, Director of IMT Ghaziabad said in a statement.

This figure represents 13 per cent of the estimated USD 4.7 trillion required (including government investments, corporate retention, PE/VC funding, corporate debt, initial public offerings (IPOs), and other sources) to achieve a USD 5 trillion economy by FY2027, he added.

As investors recognise the immense potential of Indian startups, the country is set for a transformative journey that could redefine its business and technology landscape.

Emerging markets are set to attract increased capital inflows, driven by fintech advancements, regulatory harmonisation, and alternative investments.

Key trends include a rise in PE/VC funding, broader institutional participation, and greater digital asset integration.

This partnership enables interaction with industry practitioners, preparing future finance leaders for the post-AI world. —*PTI*

SAYS PHARMA BODY

Indian generic drugs meet global standards

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

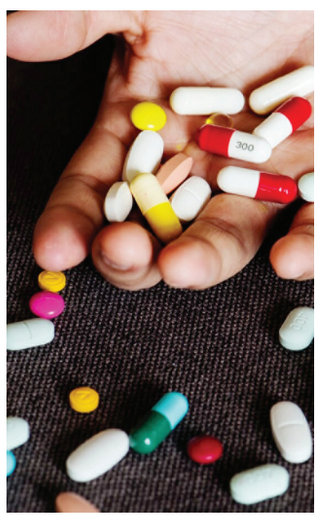


PHOTO:FREEPIK

The Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance on Wednesday asserted that generic drugs manufactured in India meet global regulatory standards and production facilities of the country are subject to far greater scrutiny, as most manufacturers supply in multiple geographies and are inspected additionally and routinely by regulators.

Refuting findings of a study at Ohio State University that stated India-made generic drugs are linked to significantly more "severe adverse events" in patients who use them than equivalent drugs produced in the US, the Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA) asserted that quality standards are not region-dependent.

The USFDA follows a stringent approval process before any generic drug is approved, ensuring that the process, controls, specification of the input API and that of the finished product are governed within a window and are followed throughout the product lifecycle, it said.

While generics are priced lower than the corresponding brands, IPA said it is unfair and unacceptable to link quality with cost.

"India's competitive cost is on account of automated high-production capacity plants, continuous process improvement, inherent cost advantage in manpower and manufacturing synergies, including scale of operations. Many products are backward integrated to the actives, realising better cost efficiencies," it said.

An exception to this rule is Over the Counter (OTC) products distributed by private label distributors like Walmart, even those which indicate India as the country of origin, it noted.

IPA also accused the report of misinterpretation of USFDA Adverse Event Reporting System (FAERS) data, saying it relies upon the post-marketing surveillance database for adverse events.

There have been recent developments in Quality Maturity (adherence to regulatory standards, risk-based approaches, and a proactive quality culture) in India, it said, adding the Indian pharmaceutical industry is committed to holding the highest standards in quality and prioritising patient safety and well-being. —*PTI*

Quick Commerce drives 75% of e-grocery orders: Report

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

Quick commerce is rapidly transforming the online grocery market, now accounting for 70 per cent -75 per cent of total e-grocery orders, according to a recent report by Bain & Company.

The report also highlighted that this marks a significant increase from around 35 per cent in 2022. The shift has been driven by strong execution, rising incomes, a wider range of available products, and the growing demand for convenience.

It said "Robust customer traction, Quick commerce already accounts for 70 per cent-75 per cent of e-grocery orders (vs. approx. 35 per cent in 2022)".

The report stated that the increasing popularity of quick commerce is also reshaping the competitive landscape. Major players such as Flipkart Minutes, Nykaa, and Myntra have entered the sector, along with new entrants like Swish and Slikk.

Companies are setting up 'back' dark stores in high-demand areas, which are connected to 4-5 'forward' dark stores. These back-end stores stock an additional 3,000-4,000 products, mainly premium and high-value items, to cater to a broader customer base.

Operational efficiency is also improving, with more dark stores now processing over 1,000 orders per day, leading to better cost management. Furthermore, logistical densification has reduced per-shipment costs by 25 per cent in 2024 compared to 2023. —*ANI*

WRC: Pulligilla & Sherif set for Indian debut

NAIROBI, 12 MARCH

India's Naveen Pulligilla and Musa Sherif are set to become the first from the country to compete in the World Rally Championships when they take part in the iconic Safari Rally Kenya 2025, a round of the WRC, from 20 to 23 March Competing for Africa Eco Motorsport team, the duo will take part in the WRC3 ARC3 class (African Rally Championship) in one of the most gruelling events in the WRC calendar. Based in Naivasha, Kenya, the rally will feature 21 challenging stages spanning a competitive distance of 383.10 km, with a total rally distance of 1381.92 km, testing endurance and skill. "The Safari Rally is one of the toughest challenges in motorsport, but we are prepared for the grind. Our goal is to finish strong and gain valuable experience," said co-driver Sherif. Pulligilla, an accomplished off-road driver from Hyderabad, competed in the Asia Pacific Rally Championship in New Zealand last year.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

All England C'ships: Sindhu out in opening round

BIRMINGHAM, 12 MARCH

Star Indian shuttler PV Sindhu suffered an inexplicable meltdown, bowing out of the All England Championships with a three-game loss to Korea's Kim Ga Eun in the women's singles opening round on Wednesday. The two-time Olympic medallist, returning after recovering from a hamstring injury, squandered an opening-game advantage to lose 21-19, 13-21, 13-21 to world number 21 Kim in a match that lasted just over an hour at Arena Birmingham. Sindhu, 29, was cruising at 20-12 in the opening game but almost threw it away, allowing Kim to recover to 19-20 before eventually winning the game. However, Sindhu's form dipped thereafter, while Kim grew in confidence, which was reflected in her improved movement and shot selection.—*PTI*

WFI to conduct selection trials for Asian C'ship

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

With its status as a National Sports Federation (NSF) restored, the WFI swung to action, announcing that the selection trials for the upcoming AsianThe championship will be held at Delhi's Indira Gandhi Sports Complex on March 15.It will be first proper trial under the supervision of the new WFI administration as it was suspended three days after it conducted election on 21 December, 2023 to pick new office bearers.The trials will be conducted to identify the top wrestlers who will represent the country in Amman, Jordan from 25-30 March.—*PTI*

Indian golfers set for Australian Women's Classic

COFFS HARBOUR, 12 MARCH

Indian golfers Pranavi Urs, Diksha Dagar, and Avani Prashanth will be eager to finally get some action at the Australian Women's Classic from Friday after last week's event in Brisbane was called off due to Cyclone Alfred.The three Indians were also due to play in Brisbane last week, but the event was called off due to the cyclone.With limited opportunities for a practice round, they will have to settle for practice sessions at the range ahead of the competition.The Ladies European Tour has confirmed that the Australian Women's Classic has been reduced to 54 holes due to heavy rainfall and flooding in the Coffs Coast region.The tournament is now set to begin on Friday morning—*PTI*

Rohit might be eyeing 2027 ODI World Cup: Ricky

Rohit has won all ICC titles while captaining India

DUBAI, 12 MARCH

Australia legend Ricky Ponting believes Rohit Sharma is still going strong. A sense of unfinished business was behind his decision to continue playing and leading India in the 50-over format until the 2027 ODI World Cup, which will be jointly hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia.

Barring the ODI World Cup, Rohit has won all ICC titles while captaining India. He came agonisingly close to laying his hands on the 50-over world title at home in 2023, only to lose to Australia in the final. Speaking on The ICC Review, the former Australia skipper said Rohit is pretty clear about his future goals.

"I mean, when you see him play like he played in the Champions Trophy final, you wouldn't say that his time is up just yet," Ponting added.

"When you start getting to that point of your career, everyone's waiting for you to retire. And I don't know why, when you can still play as well as he's played (in the Champions Trophy final), I think he was trying to put those questions to bed once and for all and say, 'No, I'm still playing well enough. I love playing in this team."And I think the fact that he said that, to me, it means that he must have that goal in mind of playing in the next (50-over) World Cup (in 2027)," Ponting stated. Handed the responsibility of captaincy in 2021 at the age of 34, Rohit on Sunday clinched his second ICC title-following the T20 World Cup win last year- as India defeated New Zealand by four wickets to win the CT here. —*PTI*

Sharma-led team defeated New Zealand by four wickets in CT 2025

PHOTO: PTI

Gill wins ICC Player of Month award

Star India opener Shubman Gill was named the ICC Men's Player of the Month for February following his stellar performances, which include his exploits in his team's title-winning Champions Trophy campaign. Gill took home the award, beating competition from Australia's Steve Smith and New Zealand's Glenn Phillips. India captain **Rohit Sharma** jumped two places to third in the latest ICC ODI batter rankings following his stellar performance in the Champions Trophy final, while teammate Shubman Gill held on to the top spot. —*PTI*

Harmanpreet Kaur's ability to unflinchingly guide Mumbai Indians in difficult situations could be the clinching factor PHOTO: PTI

MI enjoy upper hand over GG in WPL Eliminator

MUMBAI, 12 MARCH

Harmanpreet Kaur's ability to unflinchingly guide Mumbai Indians in difficult situations could be the clinching factor for the former champions when they take on Gujarat Giants- a team they have vanquished twice this season- in the Women's Premier League Eliminator here on Thursday.

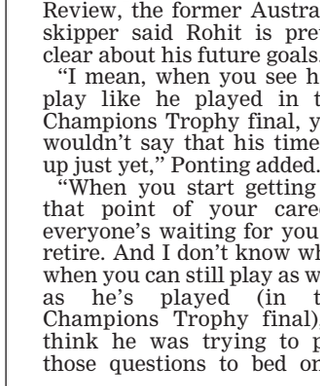
With Delhi Capitals already sitting snugly in the final after topping the WPL table with 10 points, the focus is now on India skipper Harmanpreet and the Gujarat Giants' captain Ashleigh Gardner to guide their sides into the title round. Mumbai Indians would certainly enjoy the home advantage as the match will be played at the Brabourne Stadium and the fact that they overwhelmed Gujarat Giants in their penultimate league game here on Monday, with Harmanpreet blazing to a 33-ball 54 in the nine-run victory. Mumbai Indians' playing XI has largely remained unchanged. The West Indian all-rounder could once again prove to be the match-winner for her team, following her sterling performances against the Gujarat side in their previous two meetings this season.

She broke the back of the Gujarat Giants, returning with figures of 3/16 in Vododara last month, and again tormented them in the return match at Brabourne, snaring three wickets. —*PTI*

Indian Wells: Swiatek thrashes Muchova to reach QFs

INDIAN WELLS, 12 MARCH

Twice champion Iga Swiatek walloped Czech Karolina Muchova 6-1, 6-1 to reach the Indian Wells quarterfinals on Tuesday. For Swiatek, the win continued her relentless march through the California desert tournament, where the Polish second seed has dropped just six games in her three matches.After waiting through a rain delay, Swiatek took immediate hold of the momentum, sprinting through the first four games and not dropping a first-serve point in the opening set.



Iga Swiatek

Second seed Swiatek closed it out in 57 minutes with an unreturnable serve to set up a meeting with either Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen of China, who beat Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk 6-3, 6-2.

"From the beginning, I felt like, you know, I can lead, and I didn't make many mistakes at the beginning, so then later on I just didn't want to let Karo ... be able to start playing her game," Swiatek told reporters.

"I'm happy I did that till the end."Ukrainian 23rd seed Elina Svitolina forced a third set against fourth seed Jessica Pegula and led the decider 1-0 before play was suspended due to rain.

No. 5 seed **Daniil Medvedev** sailed past Tommy Paul into the quarterfinals of the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells, where he was joined by Holger Rune, who upset Stefanos Tsitsipas, Tallon Griekspoo, and Arthur Fils on Tuesday. —*PTI*

PSA squash event returns to India after 7 years

MUMBAI, 12 MARCH

Mumbai will host a PSA event from 24 to 28 March, pitting India's top squash players like Ramit Tandon and Anahat Singh against their overseas rivals.

The USD 40,000 prize money Indian Open, to be held at the indoor courts of Bombay Gymkhana, will see participation of players from countries like Egypt, Canada, Malaysia and Japan.

Besides Tandon and Anahat, other Indian players set to take part are Velavan Senthilkumar, Veer Chotrani, and Akanksha Salunkhe.

The event will mark the return of a top squash tournament in the country after 2018, when Mumbai hosted the CCI International a PSA World Tour Silver tournament, a release from title sponsors JSW Sports said.

PHOTO: X

Starting in August 2024, PSA (Professional Squash Association) replaced World Tour tournaments with new PSA World Events, comprising new tournament tiers: Diamond, Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Copper. The Indian Open will be a copper event.

A full-glass outdoor court has been set up for the quarterfinal, semifinal, and final, creating a thrilling spectator experience, the JSW said. —*PTI*

India's absence in WTC final to cost Lord's £4 million

LONDON, 12 MARCH

India's failure to qualify for the World Test Championship final is expected to cost Lord's nearly 4 million pounds in revenue when it hosts the five-day match in June.

After finishing as runners-up in the last two editions, India missed out on a spot in the summit clash, with Australia and South Africa now set to battle for the ultimate glory in Test cricket.

"Lord's is set to generate nearly £ 4 million less in revenue for the upcoming ICC World Test Championship final after India fails to qualify," a report in The Times said.

"The absence of India has significantly curtailed the financial windfall expected by Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), underscoring the financial influence of Indian cricket across the global game." Having spent most of the past year in the top two of the ICC World Test Championship standings, Rohit Sharma and his team slipped to third place after losing a home series 0-3 to New Zealand, followed by a 1-3 defeat to Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, thus missing out on the final. —*PTI*

AFC CHALLENGE LEAGUE

East Bengal crash out after loss to FC Arkadag

ARKADAG, 12 MARCH

A 10-man East Bengal conceded two late goals to go down 1-2 to FC Arkadag of Turkmenistan and crashed out of the quarterfinals in the AFC Challenge League here on Wednesday.

Messi Bouli put East Bengal in the lead in the first minute of the second-leg quarterfinal match, but the Indian Super League side was reduced to 10 men in the 33rd minute when Lalchungnunga was sent off by the referee for his second yellow card offense.

Altymyrat Annadurdyyez then struck two late goals (89th and 90+8th) to seal the semifinal spot with 3-1 on aggregate.They had won 1-0 in the first leg match in Kolkata on 5 March.

East Bengal had qualified for the third tier of men's AFC club competition by virtue of winning the 2024 Super Cup. They had topped Group A with seven points to make it to the quarterfinals. The Red and Gold brigade got off to a dream start as Arkadag goalkeeper Rausl Charyyev could only parry Dimitiros Diamantakos's strike into the path of Bouli, who gleefully tucked home the rebound. Chances continued to fall the way of the Oscar Bruzon-coached Indian side, and they nearly doubled their advantage in the 17th minute when Diamantakos produced a surging run through the middle.

Arkadag looked to regain the advantage but Shanazar Tirkishov dragged his shot wide from just inside the box before an injury to defender Ybrayym Mammedov in the 30th minute saw him replaced by Berdimyrat Rejebov. —*PTI*

Messi Bouli in action during the AFC Challenge League quarterfinal second leg against Arkadag

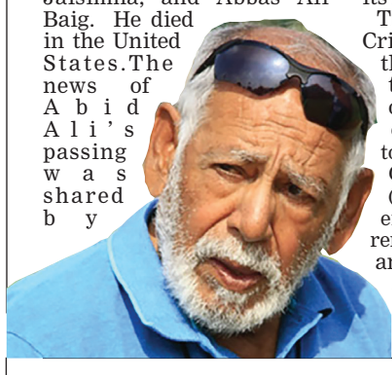
PHOTO: X @EASTBENGAL_FC

Former India all-rounder Syed Abid Ali dies

NEW DELHI, 12 MARCH

Former India all-rounder Syed Abid Ali, who was known for his versatility and sharp fielding skills, died on Wednesday after a prolonged illness.

He was 83.He was part of an illustrious group of Hyderabad cricketers that included MAK Pataudi, ML Jaisimha, and Abbas Ali Baig. He died in the United States.The news of Abid Ali's passing was shared by the North America Cricket League (NACL)."It is with profound reverence and a heart full of admiration that I share with you the passing of uncle Syed Abid Ali a cricketing legend from India who made Tracy, California, his home, and whose remarkable legacy continues to inspire us to strive for excellence," NACL posted in its Facebook page."



The North America Cricket League (NACL) and the growth of cricket in the Bay Area owe a debt of gratitude to his tireless efforts and contributions to the Northern California Cricket Association (NCCA), a testament to his enduring impact."Let us remember him in our prayers and celebrate his remarkable legacy. —*PTI*

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

PSG stun Liverpool on penalties to make Quarters

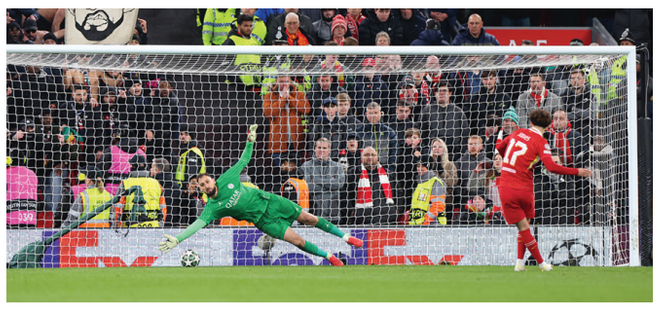
LONDON, 12 MARCH

PSG was aiming to become the first team ever to knock Liverpool out of a European tie after the Reds had won the first leg away from home and achieved the feat from the spot after Darwin Nunez and Curtis Jones saw penalties saved by Gianluigi Donnarumma.

The French champions were coming into it with a 1-0 deficit from the game in Paris last week, but Ousmane Dembele levelled it up early in the game from close range and, improbably, it finished 1-1 on aggregate with neither side able to find the net again.

Luis Enrique exploded across the Anfield pitch when Désiré Doué struck the winning penalty and was still leaping on Paris Saint-Germain players and officials when they headed down the tunnel five minutes later.

The reaction of someone who knows that one of the biggest obstacles to PSG's designs on a first Champions League title is out of the way. —*PTI*



Donnarumma denies Liverpool and Núñez to send PSG through on penalties

PHOTO: X / @PSG

Harry Kane leads Bayern Munichs

Harry Kane scored a goal and set up another as Bayern Munich won 2-0 at Bayer Leverkusen on Tuesday, going through to the Champions League quarterfinals 5-0 on aggregate. Bayern was comfortable against last season's unbeaten German champions, having already done the damage with a dominant 3-0 win at home in the first leg.

Thuram is mirroring Serie A exploits on int'l stage

MILAN, 12 MARCH

Marcus Thuram has emerged as one of Serie A's leading players this season. The Inter Milan forward is now doing it on the international stage.

Thuram scored a stunning early goal to set Inter on its way to a 2-1 victory over Feyenoord in the second leg of the Champions League round of 16 on Tuesday.

Inter advanced 4-1 on aggregate, with Thuram also having scored in the first leg and will face Bayern Munich in the quarterfinals.

Thuram, the son of former Juventus defender and World Cup winner Lilian Thuram, could have added to his tally with more fancy footwork as he showed few ill effects from an ankle injury that has restricted his playing time of late. "I've had a problem with my ankle for a month; sometimes it hurts more, sometimes less," the 27-year-old Thuram said. "I'm not at 100% yet." However, he certainly seemed back to his best right from the start at San Siro.

There were less than eight minutes on the clock when Thuram received the ball midway inside to the edge of the area before unleashing a powerful effort into the top right corner. —*PTI*